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THE INDEPENDENT

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WEATHER: Cloudy with rain (IR45p) 40p

No Eating
No Coloring
No Praying

THE TABLOID
DeVito
does
Dahl

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Richard Dawkins:
an atheist at
Christmas PAGE 17

Boom time ... but not for Tories

Anthony Bevins
Political Editor
Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

The Government yesterday used a record-breaking fall in the jobless total to claim that the economy was roaring ahead.

But Kenneth Clarke promptly cast a cloud over the good news with an outspoken attack on the Tory Euro-sceptic myth-makers.

Illustrating the central Conservative frustration, that the party's deep political divisions on Europe divert electoral attention from the Government's success in curbing unemployment and inflation, the Chancellor directly challenged the dissidents within his party.

Earlier, ministers fell over each other to welcome a record-breaking plunge in the number of people claiming unemployment benefit, and a fall in the headline jobless total to below 2 million for the first time in almost six years.

John Major, on a visit to Northern Ireland, said: "Britain's economy is now the lion that roars in Europe."

But Mr Clarke delivered a lecture in which he protested about the doubts that continued to nag away at EU membership. "Today, we are becoming prey to a mythology that we joined only an economic community, with no serious political dimension, and that the purpose of our membership was uniquely economic," he said in a lecture at the Royal Institute of International Affairs in London. "That is not the case." Mr Clarke said former Tory preachers Harold Macmillan, Sir Alec Douglas Home and Edward Heath had all argued that membership would enhance the political standing of the UK.

He added: "Europe offers us a growing opportunity to excel economically, and the best is yet to come." However, he warned: "Our continuing and future economic success, exploiting the opportunities of our enterprise economy, depends to a significant degree on Britain being and staying a key player in the politics of our Continent."

At a press conference on the latest jobless total, for last month, Mr Clarke was one of six ministers playing Santa Claus. They said Britain's jobs performance was the best in Western Europe. Growth was strong and sustainable, the Chancellor said, adding: "And

I'm glad to say it has given more jobs to more people in time for Christmas." He said voters would have to ask themselves whether they wanted to risk a change to Labour's economic policies.

Ian Lang, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, said the advantages of the UK's flexible and efficient labour market would be threatened if a Labour government signed up to the EU's Social Chapter and introduced a minimum wage.

Michael Heseltine, the Deputy Prime Minister, said

every month. Labour picked on the admission as proof of another fiddle. Its employment spokesperson Ian McCartney said more people believed in Santa than believed the Government's unemployment figures.

However, economists said yesterday's figures were evidence of a buoyant jobs market, despite the distortions. The number of new jobs has increased according to the latest evidence, although many are part-time.

This was underlined by the announcement yesterday that the restaurant chain Pizza Hut will create 5,000 posts - a mix of part- and full-time - over the next four years.

Separate official figures confirmed that high street sales have remained buoyant. Last month saw an especially strong gain in sales related to the housing market, and in clothing and footwear.

Although the economy's pick-up has not brought much sign so far of wage and price pressures, the City concluded yesterday that a small increase in base rates is on the cards for the New Year. But Mr Clarke said a rise in interest rates was not inevitable. "Things have never been set so far for the immediate future," he said.

Later, in his lecture, the Chancellor said: "People do not invest in Britain, they do not acquire our companies, they do not create new jobs in this country, just because they like to play golf or practise their English."

"They do it because they see Britain as a high-skill, low-tax, flexible, business-friendly entry-point into the big, rich consumer market place which is Europe today."

Mr Clarke said Britain and Europe went together for foreign investors, as they should for the British people. One led to the other, and as on the home front, good economics and good politics went hand in hand in Europe.

"As a country," Mr Clarke said, "we cannot choose to live by the European market-place economically and then exclude ourselves from the discussion of the political future of our continent."

"That is the path of those who would seek British withdrawal from the EU, or a fundamental renegotiation of our membership terms. It is one which we rightly reject."

Europe
The best
is yet to come



other European countries would take a lead from Britain. "Confidence in the British economy is growing and growing," he said.

The number of unemployment benefit claimants fell by 95,800 in November, the biggest monthly fall since the early 1960s. The headline figure was swollen by at least 25,000 with the introduction of the Jobseeker's Allowance, and Gillian Shepherd, Secretary of State for Education and Employment, conceded that unemployment would not be falling as much



Madonna: 'I identify with Eva Peron - she had the courage to make something incredible out of her life'

Photograph: Andrew Buurman

And then we kissed

David Lister
Arts News Editor

She might come and live in London, she will definitely have more babies, she prepared for her death scene in *Evita* by reading the *Santa* Madonna and child swept into London and, with baby Lourdes Maria safely tucked up in bed, mum gave a press conference.

She was only two hours late, which puts her just under the top division of Hollywood actresses. But her pink lipstick was rather endearingly smudged on her teeth, which showed the raw, rock artist beneath. A shrewdly calculated amalgam of styles.

It took Sir Andrew Lloyd Webber to divert attention with a curt reference to his erstwhile partner, *Evita*'s lyricist, Sir Tim Rice, who was absent: "I don't know where he is today. I just

feel it's important to be here to show my endorsement of the very hard work people have done. And I am sorry he is not here."

And very hard work it evidently was. "We endured blistering heat and bone-chilling cold," recalled Madonna. "We witnessed political uprisings and seething media attacks." Who'd be a movie star?

"I identify with Eva Peron on several levels," she informed us. "The fact that she came from a small town and came from nothing and got to the big city and had the courage to make something incredible out of her life, and people were either incredibly for or against her."

The *Independents* tried to catch her afterwards for the *de rigueur* pop-star interview, to garner her views on Europe and the political scene. But she merely proffered a hand to be kissed. I was glad to oblige.

QUICKLY

Minister criticised

The minister for the environment, Sir Paul Beresford, is expected to be strongly criticised by a report from the district auditor into the sale of council houses in the Tory flagship borough of Wandsworth, in south London, where he was the leader until 1992. Page 3

Basham libel win

Public relations consultant Brian Basham won £20,000 libel damages plus damages, over a book about the bitter war between British Airways and Virgin Atlantic which he said depicted as a professional liar. He worked for BA. Page 5

MP steps aside

The Tory MP Sir David Mitchell is to stand down as a member of the Commons committee investigating the cash for questions scandal because his son, the former whip, Andrew Mitchell, is to be called to give evidence to it. Page 2

Party hostage terror in Peru

Phil Davison
Latin America Correspondent

Well-armed left-wing guerrillas were holding at least 200 politicians, ambassadors and top businessmen hostage last night in Peru. They threatened to kill them all and then themselves, after a daring assault on a diplomatic Christmas party at the Japanese ambassador's residence in Lima.

The 20 or so masked guerrillas of the Tupac Amaru Liberation Movement (MRTA) were demanding the release of up to 500 group members and said they would start the killing with Peru's Foreign Minister Francisco Tudela, if President Alberto Fujimori did not show up personally to hear their demands. A first deadline for killing Mr Tudela at 20 minutes after mid-day (5.20pm GMT) yesterday, passed without confirmation they had carried out the threat. No shots were heard although a shot and an explosion were heard earlier.



Free: Some women were allowed to go Photograph: AP

"We are clear. The liberation of all our comrades, or we die with all the hostages," one rebel told a local radio station by phone. Another described the hostages as prisoners of war. Foreign governments urged Mr Fujimori, known for his tough line against guerrillas, not to contemplate a military assault. Spanish Prime Minister Jose Maria Aznar said an attack would lead to a "massacre". At the same time there were un-

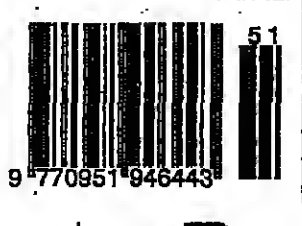
confirmed reports that anti-terrorist commandos in several countries were on stand-by to fly to the Peruvian capital.

Asked whether the US had been asked to send a hostage rescue team - there were said to be seven Americans in the building - a White House spokesman, Mike McCurry, replied: "I'm going to decline comment on that." Britain's ambassador, John Ilman, had just left the reception but at least

one British embassy employee was believed to be held. A *Financial Times* correspondent Sally Bowen, a Briton, was at the party but was released soon after the assault, along with other women guests, said to include Mr Fujimori's mother and sister. It was the most dramatic guerrilla action in South America since the Colombian M-19 group assaulted the Supreme Court building in Bogota in November 1985. In a dramatic military assault, more than 100 people died. Some 600 people, mainly senior diplomats, Peruvian politicians and executives of giant Japanese corporations such as NEC and Toyota, were at the party in the Japanese ambassador's residence in the wealthy San Isidro district of Lima. The guerrillas apparently fired a rocket at the building and stormed over its back wall, while others masquerading as waiters pushed weapons from cases of champagne. Stroke of genius, page 11

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news

significant shorts

Protests greet sale of genetic maize strain

Environmental groups and supermarkets joined in protest against the European Commission's decision yesterday to approve the sale of a new strain of genetically-modified maize.

Greenpeace called on John Gummer, the Secretary of State for the Environment, to ban the product, while Tesco said it would not allow the use of the unprocessed maize in animal feed for its meat supplies. Ciba-Geigy, which has developed the new maize, has made a written pledge that it will label bags containing its new seed to indicate the product had been obtained using biotechnology. Some scientists fear its use could lead to bacteria with heightened resistance to antibiotics. *Charles Arthur*

Major lashes IRA on visit to Ulster

John Major, in Northern Ireland for his traditional pre-Christmas prime ministerial visit yesterday, concentrated his political fire on Sinn Féin and the IRA.

In a *Belfast Telegraph* interview, Mr Major indicated that his recent statement of policy in response to Sinn Féin should be taken as his "last definitive word on the subject before the election".

Attacking Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams, the Prime Minister declared: "If Mr Adams wants to enter into the talks, and if he really wants peace, as he says he does, he has to stop preparing for war. He hasn't stopped preparing for war." *David McKerr*

Lobbies delay law on waste

Proposed laws to boost the recycling of packaging waste have been weakened and delayed by half a year following lobbying of the Government by companies making and using packaging materials, Environment Secretary John Gummer announced.

The targets for the proportion of waste packaging companies will have to recycle have been lowered. *Nicholas Schoon*

Left-winger faces discipline

A left-wing Labour Member of the European Parliament is facing disciplinary action by his party, Hugh Kerr said the leadership wanted to "make an example" of him because of his criticism of New Labour. Wayne David, who leads Labour's 62 MEPs, is refusing to nominate Mr Kerr to the Parliament's Australian delegation.

Edinburgh bribery claim

Police are to investigate allegations made to the Nolan Committee that Edinburgh planning committee councillors have taken bribes from developers. Councillor Donald Gorrie said there were "people on planning committees who were dishonest".

Jailed mother lodges appeal

Debbie Smith, the mother of three jailed for nine months for attacking her husband's mistress lodged a formal appeal against her sentence yesterday. *Charlie Bain*

Toad tables debate for the poor church mice

You or I, when tabling a debate about giving more cash for old churches, might call it something like "the funding of old churches". But then you or I are not Sir Patrick Cormack. The knight - member for Staffordshire South, MP for 26 years and author of *Heritage in Danger, Castles of Britain and English Cathedrals* - called his debate "the ecclesiastical heritage".

Many MPs are vain, some have inflated senses of themselves; but few are capable of such effortless pomposity as Sir Patrick. A large man, with a bigish head, large spectacles, a wide mouth that is often set in a shallow downwards curve and a fondness for green, Sir Patrick reminds me of the



Faster still Mr Sproat went, words merging, tumbling out of his mouth and into the record

large toad - Mr Jackson I think his name was - who sat in Mrs Tittlemouse's Kitchen saying "tidly, widdly, widdly". He is the only MP who is paired (satisfactorily for all concerned) with himself.

As ever, Sir Patrick spoke without the aid of notes. Who needs a map, after all, when the pathway between brain and tongue is so well-trodden? Next Wednesday, he reminded us, was Christmas Day ("Christmas day? Lor huv you squre if it ain't"), when "all over England people will flock to their churches and cathedrals". And it was, he said, his view that "one was closest to the soul and spirit of a nation when in its historic buildings".

Some of these historic buildings - the churches - were in jeopardy, and needed vast amounts of cash spending on them.

Shortly we would reach the millennium. "I often think that people, when they speak glibly of the millennium, forget that the millennium is the 200th anniversary of the birth of our Lord", he said. I pondered this alarming information. His mathematics suggested that the deity he worshipped was born in the year 1800, making Sir Patrick a follower of Joanna Southcott, or one of the other shaking, quivering or quaking prophets who were around at the time. I examined him more closely, and decided it was a ship.

No one though, was going to pick him up on it, because almost no one was there - apart, of course, from the alarming-looking deputy speaker, Dame Janet Fookes, in her blue and green harlequin's outfit and blood-coloured hair, and Iain Sproat, the Heritage minister, whose job it was to reply for the Government.

Mr Sproat is a good guy. He is courteous and informative in his answers to questions in the House. But he was faced with a problem. He had just 15 minutes to deliver his speech of reply to Sir Patrick - a speech that would be pored over by church leaders, vicars and congregations across the land - and he had in his hand a text (prepared for him, no

doubt, by enthusiastic civil servants) that would take at least an hour to say. Unfortunately, poor Mr Sproat only realised his predicament about five minutes into his address, when all the time-consuming pleasantries had already been uttered.

The minister was in a race against time. He speeded up considerably, but still the pile of pages in front him seemed impossibly thick. Faster still he went, words merging into each other, tumbling out of his mouth and into the record. "Chiddle diddle VAT swiddle bubble," he told us. And finished, to a silent round of applause. "Tidly widdly widdly", nodded Sir Patrick, happily.

Minister heads for censure on home sales

Christian Wolmar
Westminster Correspondent

The environment minister, Sir Paul Beresford, is expected to be strongly criticised by a report into the sale of council houses by Wandsworth where he was leader until 1992.

The report, by the district auditor, Rowland Little of Binder Hamlyn, is to be published today and will open up a new front in the sleaze war between the parties. The report covers the council house sales policy of the council in the 1980s and early 1990s and has strong resonance with events in Westminster where the council's designated sales policy led to surcharges of £3.6m being imposed on the former leader Lady Porter and eight other councillors and officers by the district auditor.

The Wandsworth district auditor is expected to confirm his own preliminary views about the illegality of the council's actions but falls short, again, of recommending that Sir Paul and other councillors involved in the scheme should be surcharged. The report is expected to say that while the council made a number of mistakes, unlike Westminster, it did not try to get away with selling properties in politically marginal areas to boost the Tory vote.

In a preliminary report issued by Mr Little in March 1995, Wandsworth was criticised for "misdirecting itself in law by failing to strike a balance between the need to promote home ownership and the needs of... homeless households". By declaring in September 1992 new sales areas where all homes becoming vacant would be sold rather than re-let, "Wandsworth failed to take into account matters which it ought to have". Since council house sales started in Wandsworth in 1978, they have brought the council £450m in receipts, but between 1982



Sir Paul Beresford: Under fire over council house sales

and 1991 homelessness acceptances doubled. It was this failure to consider this mounting problem, while selling vacant houses which could have been re-let to those in need, which led to the criticism of the council.

Despite the criticism and the finding that the council acted illegally, Mr Little was not in favour of surcharge proceedings because the financial costs would have outweighed the benefits to ratepayers.

Mr Little's continued opposition to a surcharge will disappoint the 16 objectors who brought the case including Peter Hain, a former parliamentary candidate for the nearby seat of Putney, and now a front-bench Labour MP.

Mr Hain said he had been very disappointed at the preliminary finding. "It was ridiculous that they got off. Beresford should have resigned anyway because he was head of a council that had acted illegally. If the auditor has again ducked the issue, we will consider whether it is possible to have a judicial review of his decision."

The sales policy was devised when Sir Paul was chairman of the council's housing committee between 1980 and 1985, and was so successful that Westminster tried to copy it.

Blair launches prime-time television offensive



Tony Blair yesterday pictured on the *Des O'Connor Show* as part of a charm offensive to dispel his "smarmy" image. Added to an appearance on BBC Radio 4's *Woman's Hour*, he was trying to show that like other 14-year-old schoolboys, he was a bit of a teenage tearaway, writes Colin Brown.

The leader of the Labour Party wanted to go a bit further than most other boys who bunked off from school, however.

When he played truant, he tried to catch a flight to the Bahamas. "It was one of the craziest things I've ever done," he said. His parents put him on a train in Newcastle to return to Fettes School in Edinburgh, but instead of heading off to lessons and "tagging" for older boys, he got changed into casual clothes and made his way to Newcastle Airport, where he joined passengers on a flight. "I snuck onto the plane, and we were

about to take off when the stewardess came up to me and said: 'I don't think I actually saw your boarding pass'." He told her: "Don't tell anyone, but I'm running away." His escape never got off the ground. But the disclosure that he had played truant may have endeared Mr Blair to the elderly women, who, according to the polls, have so far proved impervious to his charms, and find him "smarmy".

MP quits sleaze committee

Christian Wolmar

The senior Conservative back-bencher, Sir David Mitchell, is standing down as a member of the Commons committee investigating the cash for questions affair.

Mr Mitchell was a whip in 1994 when, unusually, he was appointed to the now defunct Members' Interests Committee. According to Angela Eagle, a Labour MP on the committee at the time, "Mr Mitchell was always at the forefront of things. He took a very active role. He would make his views known very early on, so that his side knew what the line was. This was not the way a quasi-judicial committee

should conduct its business."

Mr Mitchell will be asked by the Standards and Privileges Committee why he wrote a note to the chief whip in October 1994 following an article in *The Independent*, which revealed that Mr Hamilton had failed to declare a consultancy with a public relations company.

The note, written on the day the article was published, said that Mr Mitchell had spoken to the Registrar of Members' Interests and the memo explained that the Registrar would have to conclude that the

committee was entering uncharted waters, and that there was no precedent to knowing what it would decide.

Mr Mitchell, MP for Gedling, has written an explanatory note to the Standards and Privileges Committee, about his role in the Hamilton affair, but feels he has done nothing wrong and refuses to apologise for any actions.

Under new terms of giving evidence announced by the Committee following the Willets hearings, Mr Mitchell will be expected to give evidence on oath.

GRRRAND NATIONAL WINNER

Just roll it round your tongue.

GRRRAHAM'S PORT

W.A.J. GRAHAM'S THE PORT OF AUTHORITY

Pairing dispute turns into farce

Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

Labour's new campaign of non-co-operation with the Government went from guerrilla warfare to Christmas pantomime farce last night as both sides said they had broken parliamentary rules by accident.

While Conservatives accused Labour of cheating to inflict a government defeat on Tuesday, Labour accused the Tories of similar skulduggery in a crucial vote on Monday. Opposition parties have given notice that pairing arrangements under which opposing MPs agree not to vote will be suspended from January.

There was embarrassment for the Conservatives as 13 out of 15 Labour "cheats" who were supposed to have voted despite being paired turned out to have made no such agreement.

One of the Tories who was supposed to have been cheated admitted that he missed Tuesday's vote because he had gone to a BBC Christmas party. Jerry Hayes, MP for Harlow, said he thought his pair, John McAllion, would also be out. "I went to a very good par-

ty, and I assumed there wasn't going to be a vote anyway," he said.

At the same time another Conservative, Julian Brazier, was forced to apologise to his Labour "pair", Rhodri Morgan, for accidentally voting despite an agreement not to do so.

Although there were no official apologies from Conservative Central Office, the former party whip Sir Archie Hamilton said he had reservations about what had happened on Monday when three Tory MPs were apparently "double-paired" with both Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs, giving the Government three extra votes.

"I think it was something that the Government might now regret, particularly in terms that we would have won that vote anyway," he said.

There were also rumours that the Cabinet's paging system had broken down on Tuesday and that senior ministers were never even told there was a vote. One senior Conservative source revealed that a number of Cabinet ministers and a dozen or so backbench MPs were all at the same Christmas party.

The Labour MP Alan Simp-

son said: "It isn't our fault if the Tories are drunk in charge of the country."

Then Labour was forced to own up a gaffe of its own as two of its paired MPs admitted that they had voted against the Government in a debate on its anti-stalking Bill when they had promised not to.

One, John Manton, sheepishly told party whips that he had gone into the lobby when the division bell had rung without even thinking what he was doing. "It was like Pavlov's dog, I just heard the bells," he said.

A Conservative spokeswoman continued to accuse Labour of cheating, and pointed out that the party had promised to co-operate with the stalking Bill. The Government will now try to reverse Labour's amendment to the Bill in the House of Lords.

Meanwhile Labour's Chief Whip, Donald Dewar, repeated Labour's own allegations. The Government should apologise, he added.

"There has been no defence, no other explanation other than humbug and bluster," he said. *Leading article, page 15*

2012/12/19

Christmas present: Lavish gifts tempt the less-well-off as computer heroine sweeps games giants off the board

Poorest pockets buy the biggest toys

Louise Jury

People living in Britain's poorest areas are expected to spend the most on toys, games and computers this Christmas, according to new market research.

Families in the top toy-buying districts may spend twice that of the richest boroughs in the country. The national average is £76 for every child.

The estimated figures, based on a new household income survey, PayCheck, by market analysts CACI, show the three highest spenders all have a high incidence of low earners, single parents and unemployment.

In real terms, people in Knowsley near Liverpool, Halton, near Widnes, in Cheshire, and Easington, Durham – ranked as Britain's poorest district – spend up to three times more as a proportion of their income than the more affluent areas, CACI claimed.

Despite vastly different levels of wealth, families in the poorer districts appear to be spending more on toys per child than those in the richest districts, a spokeswoman said.

Barbie and Action Man, the joint top-selling toys this Christmas, cost around £25 for the Action Man Crime Buster and £19 for the Barbie Strolling Sisters. The Pre-Computer Power Pad, an electronic learning aid at number four in the charts, retails for around £90. Monopoly, which came to Britain in the mid-1930s, is the favourite board game at around £11.50.

Neither child experts nor toy retailers were surprised at the statistics, which confirm previous findings by market analysts.

Gerry Masters, of the British Association of Toy Retailers, said the phenomenon was well-known in the industry. In the East End of London, he said, he could remember seeing very large toys which were not on sale in more affluent areas. "I was told they liked big presents," he added. Similarly, in Liverpool during strikes, Fridays were seen as good days by toy stores because that was when the mothers received their allowances and would spend on the children.

In comparison, a shopkeeper in Richmond, Surrey, a

wealthy borough, always complained he had to struggle to make a living, Mr Masters said. "The parents have got school fees. Although they will spend on toys, they won't buy as many and they will be more selective. They will get something which is worthy and not be lavish."

The irony was that if children are left on their own in a toy shop to choose, they would often go for something simple. "Money is not what interests them," Mr Masters said.

Eileen Hayes, parenting adviser to the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, said the spending was a form of compensation. "It's all very well," she said, "if you've had everything you need, to make the decision that you don't have to buy all these things for your children. But if you haven't had the advantage then it's still an aspiration."

"You find the same with spending on baby goods – [the poorer families buy] the most expensive pram. In general, the middle-class and more well-off don't mind having second-hand things, whereas poor families stretch themselves."

But Mrs Hayes said the commercial pressure could be resisted. "Don't feel guilty if you can't give your children material things, because what they need is your love and your time. The rest is definitely secondary."

Sally Witcher, director of the Child Poverty Action Group, said she would not accept the CACI figures at face value. But she said: "There is ample evidence that income support is inadequate at the best of times and at Christmas even more so. What it means is people make choices about what essentials they're going to spend on."

John Alexander of the Keep Sunday Special campaign, which has been alarmed by the commercialisation of Christmas, added another warning note. "What concerns us is all the families being pulled apart by the demand and pressures of having to go and work in the shops. In many cases, dad will be working on Christmas Eve and then back on Boxing Day to get ready for the sales."



Virtually real: Lara Croft, the pneumatic 3-D star of the screen game Tomb Raider, which has had rave reviews in computer magazines. Suit: Sony

Girl-raider set to take over games world

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

Lara Croft may look like your average gun-totin', Barbie-shaped tomb-exploring British-written computer hero, but she could have two significant effects on the world of videogames.

First, this heroine from the computer game Tomb Raider, available for the Sony Playstation games console, could give Sony pole position over Nintendo and Sega, the two companies usually thought of as dominant in video games.

Secondly, she could overturn a decade of video games in which the central action figure has always been male – just like the vast majority of their players.

Ms Croft, of indeterminate age, was created by a team at Derby-based Core Design. In Tomb Raider, she is never off the screen, in her role as an explorer searching for an ancient artefact called the Scion in the

undiscovered Tomb of Qalopek in the Peruvian mountains, which apparently contains wolves, lions, bears, monkeys, bats, crocodiles, rats, pumas and dinosaurs.

The highly detailed three-dimensional experience of the game has helped the £200 Sony Playstation, released last year, rocket towards the top of the

sales charts. Sony claims that this year it has sold more than £600m worth of hardware and software for the machine, and a total of 10 million of the consoles, 2.4 million of those in Europe.

Tomb Raider, which is sold separately, costs £45, but the rave reviews it has received in games magazines has boosted Sony's fortunes.

The success of Tomb Raider will also hit Nintendo, which had hoped for a worldwide launch of its next generation of machine, the Nintendo 64, last summer, but instead was only able to launch it in the United States and Japan. A European launch is scheduled for next March, though Nintendo admits that Tomb Raider – which one review

described as "an exceptional experience that you will never forget" – will probably not be available for the Nintendo 64.

Instead, it will offer an older, familiar character – the moustachioed New York Italian plumber, Mario, whose latest adventures form one of only four games that will be available for the Nintendo 64, compared to about 200 for the Playstation.

But will games players who have experienced Tomb Raider be willing to go back to a hero who is clearly overweight and middle-aged, after the pneumatic, cave-diving Ms Croft?

"We might be the witnesses of a new generation of action games with women as main characters," said Frederick Claude, in an early review. Why? "In essence, the answer is the following: since we must watch the action during the whole game, it is much more pleasant to look at a woman." As some might say – a giant step for Sony, a tiny step for feminism.

Toy rockets to cosmic price at auction

A Newcastle factory worker, Harry Meers, yesterday paid more than three times the retail price for a Buzz Lightyear toy – a Christmas surprise for his daughter. But it was only after he spent £94.10 for Tyneside's only example of the plastic space man – bought nine months ago for £26.95 – that he realised it would be no surprise.

The auction of the toy attracted so much media attention he realised his 13-year-old daughter, Amber Elizabeth, was bound to find out in advance.



Robo-moth solves the mystery of 'impossible' flight

Charles Arthur
Science Editor

Why can insects such as the bumblebee fly? The answer has been solved by a team at Cambridge University, helped by a robot hawkmoth, and it may surprise aeronautical engineers – while leading to the design of a new generation of helicopters and propellers.

According to standard laws of aerodynamics, insects' wings are too small to lift their comparatively huge bodies. But clearly, insects do fly – which led Charles Ellington, of the university's department of zoology, to decide to pin down the answer once and for all.

First, he studied the wing motions of a hawkmoth in an air tunnel, by blowing smoke over it while it flapped its wings.

Then, he built a robotic version, designed to have exactly the same wing motion, but five times larger.

The robot used four servo motors and an elaborate gearbox to drive the movements of the wings, which were made of a framework of rigid and flexible brass tubes, covered on both sides with black elastic cloth. Smoke was used to illustrate the air flow forces on photographic images.

Scientists had previously thought that the missing link in the aerodynamic equation – the extra lift required to keep an insect aloft – might be generated by "rotational lift", through the twisting of the wings as they flap.

But Professor Ellington reports today in the science journal *Nature* that the extra lift needed to keep the moth aloft is generated during the wings' downstroke, when a spiral vortex of air travels across the leading edge of the wing, from base to tip. The vortex, a region of swirling air, creates a region of low pressure which sucks the wing upwards – creating lift.

The vortices form a complex pattern of loops and spirals which spin away from the wings. Just as one vortex dies out – which would lead to stalling, and cause an earthward plunge – another begins at the body, reinforcing the lift.

Professor Ellington called the process of flying by this method "dynamic stalling": "This is so unlike what we had expected all along that this is a shock, really."

The findings could probably be applied to helicopter and propeller design, as those also use vortices to create lift.

"It's something we are going to start looking at," Professor Ellington said. "It's a way to get something like two or three times more lift."

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Yorkshire	£100
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East Midlands	£105
East of England	£115
South East	£125
South West	£130
Wales	£110
Northern Ireland	£100
Scotland	£110
England	£100
Wales	£110
Northern Ireland	£100
Scotland	£110

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PR consultant wins libel damages over journalist's book on the bitter war between British Airways and Virgin Atlantic



Brian Basham and his partner Lynne Goodson outside the High Court. Photograph: PA

£20,000 'Dirty Tricks' libel victory for the man they call The Streetfighter

Michael Streeter

Public-relations consultant Brian Basham yesterday won £20,000 libel damages plus costs over a book on the bitter war between British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, which he said depicted him as a "professional liar".

A High Court jury unanimously agreed that the book *Dirty Tricks*, written by the television journalist Martyn Gregory, wrongly portrayed Mr Basham as a "peddler" of untruths at the centre of the "dirty tricks" campaign against Virgin.

For a butcher's son from South London, a man who is known in his trade as The Streetfighter and who has a long list of big-name former or current clients - including Lord Hanson, Mohamed Al Fayed, Robert Maxwell and the President of Malawi - it was one of his most satisfying victories to date.

Mr Basham, who rose to prominence in the yuppie Eighties as a master exponent of what he called pro-active PR - and what critics dubbed "negative PR" - admitted the allegations had hung over him "like a cloud".

Mr Justice Ian Kennedy awarded costs - estimated at

Discussions with Hollywood film producers to turn *Dirty Tricks* into a movie - with suggestions that Kevin Costner should play the Branson role - are now likely to be shelved.

Mr Gregory, an award-winning documentary maker, was visibly upset after the verdict. "It's a very, very sad day for investigative journalism - and the British establishment has once again gathered around one of its own."

He said they were considering an appeal which he was "confident" would be successful. They had denied the libel, pleading justification.

The decision by the jury that, in effect, Mr Basham had out-gambled in dirty tricks, raises new questions about the BA/Virgin battle, which culminated in January 1993 when BA paid Mr Branson and his rival airline a total of £650,000 in libel damages and up to £4.5m costs.

At the time Mr Basham was named in a court statement and, in his words, was made a scapegoat for the company's actions against Virgin.

One experienced observer of the saga said: "If Mr Basham was not involved in dirty tricks, as the verdict says, then who was?"

The case has its origins in the late Eighties, against a backdrop of rising concern, if not paranoia, in BA about Virgin Atlantic and Richard Branson, the man they dubbed "the grinning pullover", and his ability to make serious inroads into their business.

Mr Basham, who had been retained by British Airways as a consultant from 1985, was said in *Dirty Tricks* to have played a central role in the campaign, by spreading rumours to journalists about supposed shortcomings in Mr Branson's airline and his other businesses, in an apparent bid to deter investors.

There were three main areas of contention in the case; first, the compilation of a report by Mr Basham on the Virgin chief and his companies in 1991, pointing out among other matters that Mr Branson's association with the gay nightclub Heaven was risky for a man seeking investors. The report was then leaked to selected journalists. There followed two meetings with journalists, one with Chris Hutchins, a gossip columnist on the now defunct *Today*, the other with Nick Rufford of the *Sunday Times*.

He was taped telling Mr Hutchins about rumours of infected needles found in bins outside the nightclub and the apparent availability of drugs there, and about how he would not let his wife fly Virgin Atlantic - implying safety concerns. He also told Mr Rufford of other rumours that Mr Branson was forced to pay cash in advance for his airline's fuel.

Mr Thwaites told the court that in describing these matters, the book had not "wronged" Mr Basham but had "exposed" him. Though it had not accused the PR consultant of lying, it had suggested that he passed on stories about Virgin not knowing if they were true.

But the jury accepted the claim made by Mr Patrick Milmo QC for Mr Basham, that the account was "one-sided, partial, embroidered and distorted", and in effect portrayed Mr Basham as a "peddler of lies". The Branson report - called *Operation Barbara* - had been fair and balanced, Mr Milmo said, and his client had been "set up" by at least one of the journalists, whom he had urged to check the stories independently.

His client could ignore most

insults, but "not the accusation that he was a professional liar," added Mr Milmo.

Mr Basham said in court: "I would very happily sacrifice my contract rather than spread stories which I did not believe to be true."

The defence did not seek to justify claims made in the book that Mr Basham had helped al-

ter Mr Al Fayed's family history during his bid to take over the Knightsbridge store, Harrods.

As well as running Warwick Corporate, Mr Basham, who is twice-married, runs a private company providing health care for the elderly. His work for the Royal British Legion, much of it unpaid, recently received an award for encouraging the re-

turn of the two-minute silence last year.

Mr Basham began his career in newspapers as a copy boy on the *Daily Mail* and later worked on the *Times* before moving into business PR in the Seventies, where he quickly established a reputation for being a clear-headed, tough operator, equally at home with financial

figures, business and - crucially - journalists. He helped in build up Broadstreet Associates, a powerful Eighties PR consultancy before selling out and creating Warwick.

At the peak of his career he combined an image of ruthlessness and hard work with glamorous living and expensive cars. Despite himself describing

the public relations business as "tawdry" - with irony, he insists - and hearing his like called "shabby" by Mr Thwaites, Mr Basham is in no doubt of the value of his trade.

"Nowadays, neither newspapers nor brokers and fund managers could function without the input of the PR industry," he said.

The case had its origins against a backdrop of BA's concern over Virgin inroads into its business

£400,000 - against Mr Gregory and publishers Little, Brown, and the verdict now raises the possibility of more legal actions against the book by BA and its associates. Lawyers acting for BA were in court throughout the case, as were solicitors acting for Marks & Spencer, which has issued a writ against a television programme Mr Gregory made for *World In Action* on child labour in Morocco.

The publishers were also ordered to stop any further distribution of *Dirty Tricks*. After the four-week, sometimes acrimonious hearing, Mr Basham, 52, who runs his own public relations company, Warwick Corporate, said he was "delighted" to have cleared his name. "A penny damages would have satisfied me," he said.

Mr Basham also revealed that he is considering reporting the defence barrister Ronald Thwaites QC to the Bar Council for his "outrageous" attack on him during closing speeches, in which the PR man was described variously as "wicked", "evasive", "slippery" and a perjurer.

"It was a complete abuse of privilege, almost more than flesh can bear," said Mr Basham.

The PR consultant, who was sacked by British Airways after being "thrown to the wolves" over the Virgin affair, is also to write a book about his experiences, provisionally entitled *Dicky Business* - a phrase which cropped up, ironically, in *Dirty Tricks*.

Dramatis personae



(Left to right) Martyn Gregory, author of *Dirty Tricks*; Virgin chief Richard Branson; and Kevin Costner who was suggested as a possible Branson for the film of the book

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politics



Childhood friends: Lined up at the House on the Hill Toy Museum at Stansted, Essex, are, from left, the favourite toys of MPs Gillian Shepherd, Michael Howard, John Redwood, Glenda Jackson and (tiny bear) Teresa Gorman. On show from 27 December to end of January. Photograph: David Rose

Sex offender register under critical gaze

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

The planned national register of convicted sex offenders and moves to prosecute so-called sex tourists were finally introduced by the Government yesterday in a parliamentary Bill. But details of how the register will work in practice are still far from settled, and penal experts warned that it could have little impact on the actions of paedophiles.

The promised Bill, which had been left out of the Government's programme until the Labour leader, Tony Blair, challenged John Major to include it, says that those convicted or cautioned in respect of specified sex offences (including rape and buggery) who fail to register their address and any change of name or address with the police would be guilty of an offence. The maximum penalty would be a fine of £1,000 and/or up to a month's imprisonment.

Registration would last for a minimum of five years for offenders receiving non-custodial sentences and for life in cases of custodial sentences lasting 30 months and more. An extension of the jurisdiction of United Kingdom courts aims to deter paedophiles travelling to

countries such as Thailand and the Philippines for child sex.

A consultation paper on the operation of the register had been expected with yesterday's Bill, but the Home Office minister, David Maclean, made it clear yesterday that concerns about how it should be implemented had not been resolved and that consultation would continue.

He told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme: "I see some of the most difficult of one way of taking the information that the police have on computer and trying to publish that in a way that is accessible to the community. There is a danger of vigilantes."

The potential for vigilante reaction was raised in the summer when the *Bournemouth Evening Echo* launched a "Protect our Children" campaign and pledged to publish the names and addresses of convicted paedophiles in Dorset. There was also talk of a "lynching" in Hackney, east London, if one convicted paedophile was allowed to return to the area on release from prison.

The Bill received overall support from the Association of Chief Police Officers, which will advise the Home Office on implementation, and Jack Straw, the shadow Home Secretary, pledged Labour's co-operation.

But Mary Honeyball, general secretary of the Association of Chief Officers of Probation, said: "To make a register the centre-piece of a policy to protect children could be a mistake. Only a fraction of active sex offenders are caught and convicted. We have never objected to a register but only as a part of a system that balances vigilance over children with the systematic monitoring and supervision of those offenders."

She said that assistant general secretary of the National Association of Probation Officers, said there was a danger that the public would be lured into a false sense of security. "There is a grave risk that abusers will go to ground," he said. David Colvin, Scottish secretary of the British Association of Social Workers and secretary of Action on Child Exploitation, emphasised the tiny number of abusers who were prosecuted and warned of the need for a system "under which the person could challenge, using the legal test of balance of probabilities, what is on the register". Including suspects on the register could be one way of persuading them to stop denying their problem and seek treatment on a programme, he said.

Labour's plans for human rights

Patricia Wynn Davies
Legal Affairs Editor

Individuals and pressure groups would be able to challenge the Government on a wide range of public interest issues under Labour's plans to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into British law.

The plans fall a long way short of a domestic Bill of Rights, however, while the party has fudged a key issue by avoiding discussion of whether senior British judges should be empowered to strike down an Act of Parliament for being in breach of convention rights.

A consultation document published yesterday gives no guarantee that even Parliament would make a change in law following an adverse ruling. It says: "Where, after due process UK legislation is ultimately found to be in breach of the ECHR, consideration will need to be given by the government of the day and Parliament as to what action should be taken."

Further seeds of potential conflict are sown by a proposal that Parliament should be entitled to pass Acts specifically derogating from the convention. These two provisions could mean that the most controversial claims would still have to be pressed all the way to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

On the plus side, Jack Straw, shadow home secretary, and Paul Boateng, shadow minister for the Lord Chancellor's Department, have proposed in the paper a fast-track route to the higher courts for prompt decisions on unusually difficult or controversial issues.

Claims under the convention to Strasbourg can only be brought by individuals or groups who are victims of alleged violations. Labour would broaden the range of potential claimants by including:

- Individuals seeking to vindicate the broader public interest in constitutional government
- Pressure groups who believe their cause may be prejudiced
- Representative group interests whose collective interests may be disadvantaged.

Tories fooled Labour, Callaghan claims

Anthony Evans
Political Editor

The Labour leadership has become a victim of Tory brainwashing, the former prime minister James Callaghan claims in a *New Statesman* interview today.

He was chancellor of the chequer, home secretary and foreign secretary before becoming Labour's last prime minister in 1976, and argues that it is not true to suggest there is anything new in Labour's tough line on crime. As Tony Blair is credited with turning the tables on the Tories with his sound-bite "tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime", Lord Callaghan's attack could be taken as a rare swipe against the new leader.

But he tells the *New Statesman*: "I listened to what our people in the cities and towns were saying. I remember Eric Heffer, who was on the left of the party, exploding with anger when anyone suggested we ought to be soft on these matters. I was seen as being on the right of the party, so we formed an odd alliance."

"There are a number of myths about the way we behaved which have been promulgated by the Conservative government and which somehow our own people, our spokesmen, have come to accept." For good measure, Lord Callaghan adds: "They seem to have been brainwashed by Conservative propaganda as everyone else has been."

In fact, according to NOP poll data, the Conservatives led by 45 per cent to Labour's 23 per cent when people were asked in 1979 which party had the best law-and-order policies, compared with a Labour lead of 26 per cent to the



Side-swipe: Lord Callaghan, who questioned the Tories' 20 per cent last June.

Lord Callaghan also warns against any attempt by Mr Blair to break the relationship between Labour and the unions, saying he would be "very opposed" to that.

"I suspect most party members would agree," he says. "It is part of our heritage and it is instinctive in the party and movement that we should keep the link. Anyone who doesn't believe that doesn't understand our history or the natural foundation of our party."

While Lord Callaghan makes no reference to the leadership, which is where the threat to the union link is coming from, he tries to cloak his criticism by suggesting, curiously, that it is being posed by inexperienced newcomers not steeped in the party's traditions.

"I do hope new members will read the history of the party before they make any conclusions too quickly. Now there are many members who, by instinct, understand the roots of the Labour Party. I'm confident that the new recruits would be the same."

Lord Callaghan also says there is a danger that Mr Blair could be biting off more than he can chew with his push for constitutional reform, that he should not think of immediate action against the House of Lords. "I think the intention is to lay out a five-year plan of constitutional reform, rather than tackle every issue at once."

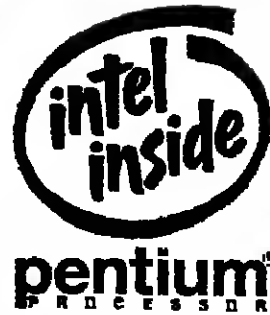
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City police tighten security ring

Armed road blocks multiply amid growing fears of an IRA Christmas bomb campaign

Charlie Bain

On London Wall in the heart of the capital's financial centre, seven officers from the City of London Police's armed response unit are screening vehicles at a road block. Two of them are armed with semi-automatic rifles. One has a German Shepherd straining at the leash.

Around the corner, at one of the eight entry points on the City's "ring of steel" security cordon, a uniformed officer flags down a light blue Ford Transit van. The driver fumbles nervously with some bright pink invoice papers and gives his name, destination and employer. On a mast above him are two cameras, one trained on his number plate, the other on his passenger seat. After about 45 seconds he has moved on.

Such scenes have been commonplace in the square mile of the City this week as security forces are on full alert amid growing fears of an IRA Christmas bombing campaign. Yesterday, the police presence was particularly apparent. At a number of entry points, officers were stopping traffic regularly and armed roadblocks were set up at random.

"Since the end of the ceasefire in February, we have to take the threat of a terrorist attack seriously and at the moment I perceive that threat to be very



Check point: Armed officers manning a road block at London Wall in the City of London yesterday

high." Commander Judy Davison of City of London Police said. "The City is a vulnerable place and the prevention of terrorism is our number one priority."

The security cordon was erected in July 1993 in re-

sponse to the IRA bomb in Bishopsgate which triggered one of the highest-profile police operations in Britain for decades. The road checks are only a small part of the City of London Police's security ini-

tiative, which has had a considerable effect on the quality of life for residents and workers. Since 1993 there has been a 16 per cent drop in all types of crime. At the same time, traf-

fic levels have been reduced and the streets are safer to cross and less filled with exhaust fumes. The weapons employed against terrorism are an effective mixture of camera technology and liaison with the local community. At entry points, 27 cam-

eras photograph the number plate of every vehicle and the face of every driver. Another 13 snap vehicles leaving the City and 47 at key points enable police to track suspicious vehicles.

There are also 1,265 private cameras manned by security guards ready to alert police at the slightest hint of danger. This Camera Watch scheme came into being after a private closed circuit television camera detected the Bishopsgate bombers walking towards the Bank of England after parking the truck packed full of explosives. "We suddenly realised we could have access to hundreds more cameras if we contacted these businesses and worked with them," Chief Inspector Chris Wheeler, the force's crime prevention officer, said.

This month, the Corporation of London announced that it would extend the ring of steel entry points to cover 75 per cent of the City. In February, work will begin on installing a new system enabling cameras not only to check their own number plates but to check them against other data within four seconds.

Chief Superintendent Paul Eskriett, head of operational support for the force, says that there is no room for complacency. "The terrorist has many advantages and we'll never be able to make the City 100 per cent secure. But we have the advantage of a relationship with the local community which we've built up over a period of time. Our job is to stop anyone from getting killed and I hope we can continue to do that."

THE INDEPENDENT/NSPCC Victims of Abuse Appeal

Child's play that helps wounds heal

Clare Garner

A seven-year-old boy spent six weeks crafting his clay pot, then smashed it to smithereens. It may sound like a futile exercise, but making and breaking is all part of a valuable healing process.

Pottery is just one of the many play techniques employed at the Doncaster Therapeutic Centre, a project funded by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and social services.

The first batch of sexually abused children embarked on the therapy programme last May. Many are now showing signs of coming to terms with their painful pasts.

Christine Furness, the project's senior practitioner, is delighted with the results. "We get feedback from the children themselves and the parents that they are more able to relax, which is really important," she said. "A lot of the kids are very stressed out, pretending to be OK, when inside they don't feel OK. But after a while, stress-related ailments such as headaches and tummy aches calm down; they are more able to make friends and keep them, and they begin to feel comfortable talking to people."

The children - aged between 3 and 16 - are referred to the Doncaster projects via social services, after discussion with the family. The therapist is frank with the child, as Ms Furness explained. "We say: 'We know you've been sexually abused. We're sorry about that, but you can't change that. What we can do perhaps is to provide some space and help you to look at some of the feelings that that has left you with.'"

The one-to-one play sessions

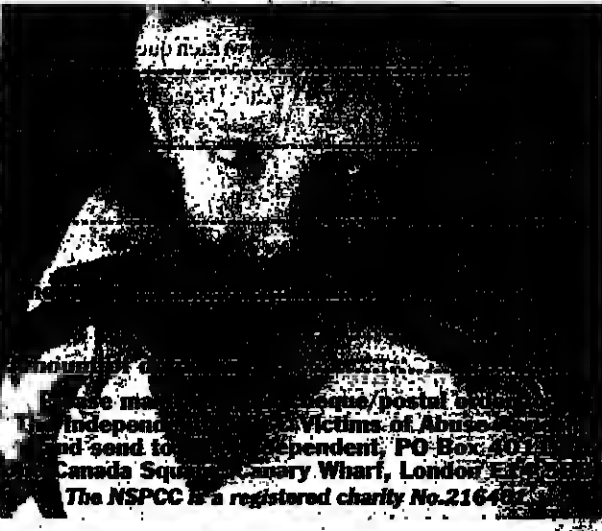
help children who have suffered sexual abuse to learn to "live in the present and for the future". Ms Furness said: "It's a place where they can actually feel and do things that they wouldn't be able to do in a normal life situation. A small child might want to play with the dolls in a way that gets rid of its feelings. An older child might want to talk like an adult or do two things at once. They might paint at the same time as talking, so they don't have to look into the eyes of the therapist."

The play is always "child-led". And each child behaves differently. Some are "controllers", others "victims". "A child might say: 'I'm angry. I'm upset. I'm disgusted. I can't concentrate. People are out to get me,'" said Ms Furness.

"But a lot of the playing is very caring, perhaps in the way the children would like to have been cared for or protected themselves. Alternatively, there might be a lot of happy drawings, as if to say 'this is how life should be.' Some of the children obviously have an idealised view of life."

After 13 one-hour weekly sessions, there is a review. So far, all 74 of the children who have participated in the project have signed up for a further 13 sessions. The centre is already bursting at the seams, with a long waiting list.

This year, the Independent's Christmas Victims of Abuse appeal is in support of the NSPCC's work helping those who have suffered from abuse. Any money you donate will go towards expanding the Doncaster Centre, to help increase the number of children it helps, provide extra play equipment, develop group work and follow-up sessions at home.



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THE SUNDAY REVIEW

Every age has its prophets: thinkers or agitators whose ideas shape civilisation for a generation or more. Who will be the voices of the new millennium? Our guide identifies 40 key thinkers with followings

Each month, more than 1,000 works of art around the world are reported stolen. Only a small fraction of them are ever recovered. Geraldine Norman explains why, and tells the stories of the paintings on Interpol's 'Most Wanted Works of Art' register

'Tis the night before Christmas, and the chairman of Marley de Zoet Scrooge is planning a little downsizing... Don't miss Martin Rowson's radical variation on *A Christmas Carol*

Plus: a new short story by Steven Heighston

IN THIS WEEKEND'S INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

1500 1000

School bullies destined for life at the top

Glenda Cooper

School bullies are clever, cold and manipulative – and could well grow up to be the captains of industry, the British Psychological Society was told yesterday.

Far from being stupid, oafish and lacking in social skills, "cold, effective bullies" tended to be more capable of understanding other people's minds than other children and were highly manipulative, according to Jon Sutton, a researcher at Goldsmiths College, south London. But with the right kind of channelling, he said, these skills could be put to legitimate use, and bullies could become successful in future life.

Mr Sutton added that anti-bullying strategies, used by many schools, may actually make matters worse by training bullies to be more efficient manipulators of their victims.

With his colleague Professor Peter Smith, Mr Sutton examined 72 children aged between seven and 10 from three schools in south-east London. The children were given stories designed to probe their cognitive and emotional understanding. Scores were obtained depend-

ing on their answers to questions about the stories.

"What we generally found was that the bullies scored highly, but not when it came to emotions," said Mr Sutton. He added that a high level of skill in understanding and manipulating the minds of others, without emotional input could be "a very frightening prospect in a school environment".

But he maintained that used properly, the skills bullies had could help them in future life. "In some respects bullies may be superior to other children," he said. "Someone who can understand people's minds and manipulate them in this way would make a very good manager at most levels. It would be interesting to give a group of managers a questionnaire and find out if any of them were bullies at school."

He said bullies were statistically four times more likely than other children to become criminals, but while psychopaths also had "cold cognition" this did not mean that bullies necessarily had psychopathic tendencies. Like bullies, psychopaths failed to respond to other people's feelings, but this was because of a lack of

empathy, not a lack of understanding.

Mr Sutton said present anti-bullying strategies may do more harm than good. Helping the bully have a better understanding of his victim may be misguided and could even help to make the situation worse. "Bullies are already very good at understanding their victim and using this approach could make them even better bullies," he said.

One way would be to make more of the "defenders", children who stood up for the victims of bullying and who are often very popular members of the class. "It would seem a good idea to empower that silent majority to break the circle of bullying," said Mr Sutton.



Seamless narrative: Geraldine McEwan's gown for a production of Congreve's *Way of the World* being prepared for a charity auction at Sotheby's last night of costumes from the Royal National Theatre's Archive, worn by many of Britain's greatest actors. Photograph: John Voos

Abattoirs flout mad-cow rules

Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

Four abattoirs have been fined sums of less than £10,000 for failing to apply safety rules introduced to curb the spread of Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease.

The Ministry of Agriculture confirmed in a report that rules are still being broken in spite of efforts to eradicate the disease, which claimed its thirteenth victim with the death of Vicki Lowther, 19, from Carlisle.

Gavin Strang, Labour's agriculture spokesman, said: "The levels of the fines seem to be inadequate when you take into account the size of the business involved." Evidence of continuing failures will increase pressure for responsibility for food safety to be taken out of the hands of Maff, which acts as both sponsor and policeman for the agriculture industry.

Ms Lowther died from the new strain of CJD linked to "mad cow" disease. The Maff report said at least one more case has been notified in Britain, and another in France.

It is thought Ms Lowther contracted CJD from eating meat, possibly from beef burgers.

The report shows there were 16 breaches of regulations in January, 18 in February, 10 in March, four in April, three in June, four in July, five in August, one in September, and three in October, the last month for which the figures are available.

The agriculture minister Tim Boswell told MPs in an answer to a written question that there have been four prosecutions this year of breaches involving specified bovine offal (SBO): an abattoir called Bakker was fined £3,000 and ordered to pay £2,000 costs for failure to stain, and failure to separate SBO; another abattoir run by a man called Kellow was fined £1,500 and ordered to pay £1,050 for similar offences; Stillmans (Somerset) was fined £7,500 and ordered to pay £3,000 costs for similar offences; and Blackwell Abattoir was fined £3,000 and ordered to pay £1,818 in costs. The report insists that in spite of the breaches, the standard of control has been high.

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Cruel facts of life in brutal world

Humanitarian idealists in the line of fire

Christopher Bellamy

The killing of six International Red Cross staff in Chechnya has spurred new efforts to draw up rules to protect vulnerable people working for humanitarian organisations.

At present, there is no common database listing who is doing what and where. Some of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are large, highly professional groups. Others are small and well-meaning but sometimes naive, and vulnerable to casualties from drug-dealing, drunken gunmen or road accidents. But, as the Chechen massacre shows, even the professionals are not always safe.

The people who work in the field are mainly young – in their twenties and thirties. Many are medically trained, but there are also logisticians, engineers, even architects, like one of the Red Cross workers killed in Chechnya. They work hard and play hard. They are, perhaps, the modern equivalent of volunteers who went to Spain and fought in the Civil War.

The proliferation of agencies has given rise to demands for regulation, both for their own protection and to avoid duplication of skills. British Overseas NGOs for Development – Bond – has 145 agencies based in the UK registered as members. A new project, People in Aid, is trying to promote a code of practice, to be published next year which would facilitate greater co-ordination between NGOs. The draft code of practice stresses that individual workers are the key, that field staff must be consulted by management, and that they should be given the best training and

support. The last principle is security.

"The work of relief and development agencies often places great demands on staff in conditions of complexity and risk," the code says – something of an understatement.

The greatest concentration of NGOs in recent years has been in Bosnia, because it has been prominent in the media and is relatively easy to reach. Conditions away from the immediate battlefronts were relatively civilised. Only the bigger, more professional organisations have operated in the much more demanding conditions of the former Soviet Union, Somalia, central Africa and Cambodia.

The Red Cross, which lost six workers in Chechnya – the worst massacre in its 132-year history – on Tuesday morning was the original NGO. Henri Dunant, its Swiss businessman founder, hastening to do business with Napoleon III of France, stumbled on the dreadful aftermath of the Battle of Solferino in June, 1859, when French and Austrian armies had collided in northern Italy.

He organised emergency aid services for the wounded of both sides and later proposed the formation of voluntary relief societies in his book, *Un Souvenir de Solferino*, of 1862.

The Red Cross, jealous of its independence, is the NGO most associated with operating in war zones. Its prime duties are protection of prisoners of war and civilians in time of war, and it acts as an intermediary between warring states in a country.

The only agencies operating in Chechnya were the ICRC, Médecins sans Frontières



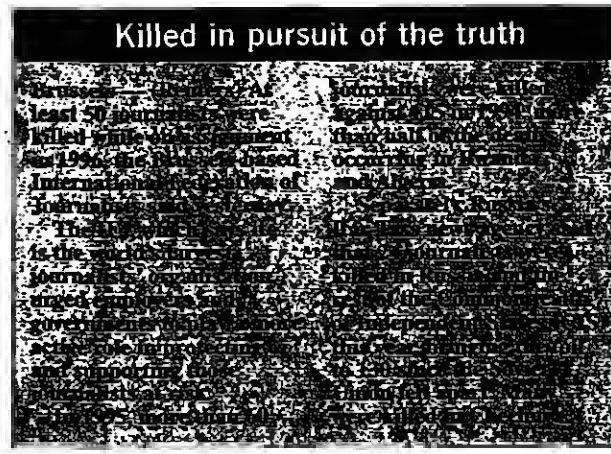
(MSF), and the British agency, Merlin (Medical Emergency Relief International). All pulled their teams out of Chechnya yesterday, though they remained in neighbouring republics.

MSF typifies the front-line aid agencies, concentrating on the areas where war casualties are highest. In July, it had 85 expatriate staff and 526 local staff in Afghanistan; corresponding figures in other hot spots were 92 and 1300 in Liberia, 71 and 1740 in Burundi, 86 and 794 in Angola, 111 and 1429 in Rwanda, and 89 and 878 in Zaire.

NGOs often work under the umbrella of the UN, usually the

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but also the UN Children's Foundation, UNICEF, the World Health Organisation and the World Food Programme.

Britain's Overseas Development Agency (ODA) also plays an active role in the field. ODA drivers trucked aid to central Bosnia and Sarajevo throughout the civil war. In the past three years, most of Britain's emergency aid has gone to the states of the former Yugoslavia – £38m last year, followed by Angola and Rwanda. Overall, most emergency aid – 46 per cent – goes to Africa.



Aid agencies pull out after workers shot

Helen Womack
Moscow

All the main international aid agencies were yesterday withdrawing staff from Chechnya in protest at the brutal killing on Tuesday of six foreigners working for the International Committee of the Red Cross in the troubled Caucasian region.

Russian politicians and Chechen separatist leaders alike condemned the night-time shooting of the medics as they slept in their hospital and vowed that the incident, evidently a political provocation, would not be allowed to disrupt the region's tentative progress to peace.

The bodies of the aid workers – five women, from Norway, Canada, Spain and New Zealand, and one man from The Netherlands – were moved initially to Nalchik in neighbouring Kabardino-Balkaria after the attack by unknown gunmen, who stole clothing from the hospital. Some 70 surviving Red Cross workers also left, heading ultimately for Switzerland and their home countries, and the hospital in the Chechen village of Novye Atagi was abandoned to the locals.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

also froze its work with some 80,000 people displaced in the two-year conflict, which has killed tens of thousands.

Local doctors were distressed by the departure. "It will be a big catastrophe for us," said Lyuba Archakova, head doctor of Hospital Number Four in the Chechen capital, Grozny. "We just don't have the resources to help people. The foreign aid organisations were bringing us all our equipment and medicine."

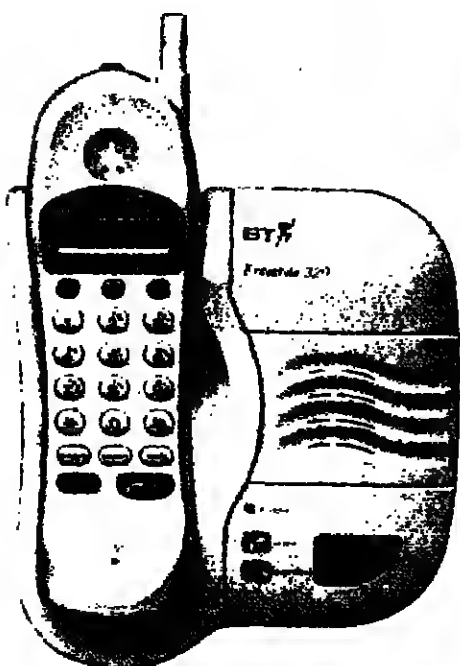
President Boris Yeltsin continues to convalesce after his heart operation in November but Russia's Prime Minister, Viktor Chernomyrdin, lost no time in denouncing the shooting, the worst ever single attack on the ICRC. "The Russian government appreciates this humanitarian activities of the Red Cross and decisively condemns this cruel and senseless crime."

Ruslan Kadyrov, a minister in the separatist coalition running Chechnya now that Russian troops are leaving, called the attack "an intentional and planned provocation aimed at cancelling our elections for a president and parliament". The vote is set for 27 January.

A fragile peace was achieved this autumn after Moscow and the Chechens agreed to shelve for five years the highly sensitive issue of whether the region should have full independence from Russia. But both sides speak of a "third force" seeking to derail the peace process. Chechens suspect the motives of hardliners in the Russian military and security services while the Russians worry that moderate separatists such as Aslan Maskhadov and Zelimkhan Yandarbiyev cannot control their militant former comrades.

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How the 'genius' of a tiny band of terrorists eclipsed the Shining Path

Phil Davison,
Latin America Correspondent

Peru's Tupac Amaru guerrilla group had long lived in the shadow of the larger, more famous Sendero Luminoso (Shining Path). Not any more. In its daring, planning and execution, Tuesday's attack on a Japanese diplomatic reception in Lima surpassed any of Shining Path's terrorist operations.

It was a work of genius, the perfect target at the perfect time," said a senior European diplomat who did not attend the reception at the Japanese ambassador's residence. He was referring to the fact that many Peruvians have been increasingly critical of growing Japan-

ese influence in the economy, encouraged by President Alberto Fujimori, himself of Japanese origin. "And to get so many dips [diplomats], government members, Japanese businessmen and other bigwigs together at the same time, sipping champagne and nibbling canapés, is bound to have a certain resonance among the left and the poor."

While Shining Path was always Maoist, the Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement, known in Spanish by its initials, MRTA, followed the ideals of Fidel Castro's Cuban revolution. The Peruvian military has long accused the Castro regime of supplying it with arms, cash and training.



Tupac Amaru was the name of an Inca chief who resisted the Spanish conquistadores but was captured and executed in 1572. But the guerrilla group took the name from a later fighter, Jose Gabriel Condorcanqui, who used the *nom de*

guerre Tupac Amaru II and was executed in 1781 for leading an unsuccessful revolt against the Spaniards.

The group carried out its first attacks in 1984, two years after the emergence of Shining Path. While the latter built up a net-

work of up to 10,000 members by the end of the Eighties, mostly in urban shantytowns or remote mountain or jungle villages, Tupac Amaru was never thought to number more than 1,000. The Lima assailants say up to 500 MRTA members are

in jail and are demanding their release in return for the hostages' freedom. The MRTA appeared to have been largely crushed in 1992, the year President Fujimori broke the back of Shining Path with the capture of that group's leader, Abimael

Guzman, now serving a life sentence in solitary confinement. In June of that year, Tupac Amaru's leader, Victor Polay, was captured and is also now doing life. His release is one of the Lima assailants' key demands.

The group hit the head-

lines a year ago when a young New York woman, Lori Berenson, was among several members or sympathisers detained in Lima. She was sentenced to life by a "faceless" military tribunal - army officers who keep their identity secret by us-

ing one-way mirror screens in court.

She was accused of helping plan a takeover of the Peruvian Congress, a plan which diplomats say may later have been adapted to Tuesday's attack on the Japanese reception.

The hostage drama is a blow to President Fujimori, whose chief claim to popularity was that he ended the long guerrilla conflict. Although his popularity has been waning, he recently persuaded Congress to accept a bit of legal sleight-of-hand - a new interpretation of the constitution - which will let him run for a third five-year term in 2000. His authoritarian style and eagerness to cling to power have already shown signs of provoking a resurgence of the left.

The Marxist guerrilla groups which fought or terrorised right-wing or military governments throughout Latin America for three decades must fizzle away as democracy took hold. But a tendency towards power-hungry by Latin leaders shows signs of boosting sympathy with leftist, anti-government groups.

Mr Fujimori, Argentina's Carlos Menem, Brazil's Fernando Henrique Cardoso and Ecuador's Abdala Bucaram are all talking of running again, even if it means tampering with their constitutions.

In Mexico, the Peoples Revolutionary Army attacked official targets in the south this year.

Photograph: AFP

significant shorts

Lagos bomb raises fears of unrest

A bomb exploded in Lagos, Nigeria's biggest city, critically wounding 12 soldiers and raising the prospects of a violent Christmas in the troubled nation. Witnesses said a bus carrying 60 soldiers was ripped apart by the bomb, planted in a refuse dump. It was the third bomb blast in Lagos in a month.

Reuters - Lagos

Havel pleads with deputy PM not to quit

The Czech President, Vaclav Havel, urged the Deputy Prime Minister, Jan Kalvoda, to reconsider his resignation after admitting lying about his qualifications. Mr Kalvoda, who heads a junior coalition party, had claimed to be a doctor of law. He is one of several MPs discovered to have falsified CVs and the second to resign.

Reuters - Prague

Kremlin still wary of Nato

Russia continued its opposition to Nato enlargement when its Defence Minister, Igor Rodionov, visited alliance headquarters in Brussels, and repeated Russian concerns that expansion would violate the "military-strategic balance".

Christopher Bellamy

More Kenyan students die

Kenyan police shot dead two students during a riot at Kenyatta University, outside Nairobi. They were shot when police opened fire as students protested at the killing on Tuesday of a student at Egerton University, 125 miles from the capital.

Reuters - Nairobi

Prisoners take over jail

Nearly 3,000 prisoners took control of Bangladesh's western Jessore jail, demanding general amnesty and better conditions. The prisoners struck on Monday, when the nation was celebrating the 25th anniversary of independence from Pakistan.

AP - Dhaka

Consumed with success

The Michelin guide, bible of gourmets across Europe, gave restaurants in Spain and Italy its coveted three-star rating. El Bulli, in Roses, north-eastern Spain, and Don Alfonso 1890, in Sant Agata sui Due Golfi, near Sorrento, achieved the top rank, an honour enjoyed by 19 restaurants in France.

Reuters - Paris

Hooker Barbie hits the streets

While US shoppers pleaded for Holiday Barbies, stores here offered a more eclectic assortment, including Trailer Trash Barbie, Hooker Barbie and Drag Queen Barbie, and even let customers specify the number and location of body piercings.

AP - San Francisco

Train on the rampage

A train, operated only by a remote-controlled locomotive, and its 55 wagons ploughed through dozens of crossings, three stop signs and passed several other trains before a train driver stopped them.

AP - Omaha, Nebraska

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international

Berlusconi learns to love his enemies

Andrew Gumbel
Rome

When Silvio Berlusconi first swept into Italian politics three years ago, his mission was "to save the country from the communists". These days, though, the people he calls communists – in reality the Social-Democrat successors to the old Communist Party known as the PDS – are some of the best friends he has.

To call it a late-flowering love affair might be exaggerat-

ing, but there is definitely an attraction of mutual interests. With tensions growing within Italy's centre-left coalition government, the PDS seems to find it easier to talk to Mr Berlusconi and his party, Forza Italia, than it does to its own allies.

This week, under the influence of the PDS's canny leader Massimo D'Alema, the government cut what seemed to be an outrageous deal with Mr Berlusconi, guaranteeing him the right to continue running his monopoly on private television

for the next six months, even though the Constitutional Court has deemed it to be illegal. Ostensibly the reason for the deal was to give parliament time to draw up new legislation that would modernise the whole of the broadcasting sector, including cable and satellite.

But that on its own does not explain why Mr Berlusconi was so scrupulously consulted on the matter, and a blind eye so glaringly turned to the blatant conflict of interests. The nub of the matter is that the PDS is find-

ing it ever harder to keep the governing coalition together. The so-called "Olive Tree" stretches from the communist hard-left to the free-market right, an impossible clutch of customers to keep satisfied simultaneously when it comes to such key matters as the budget-cutting measures necessary to qualify Italy for European monetary union.

The 1997 budget, which has almost completed its passage through parliament, was sealed only by making big concessions

to the left, and keeping public spending cuts to a bare minimum. If, as an IMF forecast has predicted, the government comes under pressure to slash the budget further next spring, some part of the coalition is bound to give way. To stave off this looming crisis, the PDS is courting allies further afield. Mr Berlusconi is certainly not about to join the government, but he can be useful to Mr D'Alema in other ways. First, he can agree not to filibuster parliament in its efforts to push through a

backlog of important legislation. Secondly, he can cooperate in overhauling the constitution to make Italy easier to govern. Further down the road, there might be room for further negotiation: support for further budget-cutting measures from Forza Italia, perhaps, in exchange for some kind of amnesty – exonerating Mr Berlusconi from the various charges of corruption and business malpractice that he is facing. This may not be the politics of high principle, and

indeed it is infuriating a minority of left-wingers including some members of the PDS. But it is a mark of the widely-acknowledged tactical brilliance of Mr D'Alema.

So far, Mr Berlusconi is playing along partly because it suits his own personal interests, and partly because he thinks he might yet be able to outwit Mr D'Alema. His allies are working hard on the hypothesis that the present government might fall next spring, and that a cross-party alliance cutting out

both the far left and the far right could then take Italy into Europe and the next general election.

What is striking in all this is the erosion of the boundary between government and opposition – harking back to the old days of Christian Democrat hegemony in Italy. The notion of defeating one's enemy by inviting him in seems to be an enduring one in this country, and one that could yet save Mr Berlusconi from an ignominious exit from public life.

Heated words in battle over bonus ends in Thai workers setting factory ablaze

Bangkok (AP) – Police were yesterday searching for ringleaders of angry workers who torched the headquarters and factory of a Japanese company in a dispute over year-end bonuses, newspapers said.

At least 2,000 workers, many of them drunk, set fire to a compound of the Sanyo Universal Electric company late on Tuesday night after bonus negotiations broke down. Workers who gathered in the fenced company compound threw rocks, whisky and beer bottles at the buildings and then started setting wooden debris, electrical appliances and refrigerators alight.

The fires spread to the buildings. More than 400 police were sent to the scene but were unable to stop the workers. Police said about 10 ringleaders were responsible for orchestrating the protest.

According to the Bangkok Post, the fire destroyed the company's eight-storey headquarters and a four-storey warehouse and plant where refrigerators, televisions and air compressors were being manufactured. It was believed to be the worst damage to a major firm in Thailand resulting from a labour dispute.

The Bangkok Post said the company's management had offered a bonus equivalent to three months of wages to its workers, rather than the 5.75-month one it provided last year. Year-end bonuses are customary in Thailand but they are rarely as high as that given by Sanyo.



Towering inferno: Firefighters vainly spraying the flames, which engulfed the Sanyo factory in Bangkok, torched by a mob of 2,000 angry workers.

Photograph: AP

Official at FBI 'spied for Russia'

Rupert Cornwell
Washington

An FBI employee was arrested on spying charges yesterday. First reports said he had been working in counter-intelligence and had spied for the Russians for at least five years.

Justice Department officials said he was arrested at the FBI's training centre in Quantico, Virginia. He had been transferred to the centre, a less sensitive posting, after he fell under suspicion. The department described the arrest as a "major development in a significant criminal case".

The apparent unmasking of a new spy came a month after the arrest of Harold Nicholson, a senior CIA instructor, on charges of passing the names of CIA officials to the Russians in exchange for \$130,000 (£110,000). He is the highest CIA official ever to be accused of spying.

Early accounts said the man arrested yesterday had worked at the FBI since 1983, and had specialised in "national security", in other words, counter-intelligence. He had apparently worked for the Russians "for more than five years but less than 10". But it was not clear how serious was the information he had handed over, nor how much he had been paid. Another official said there appeared to be no link between him and Mr Nicholson.

Given the FBI's task of tracking down spies in the US, a turncoat agent would be a huge prize for the intelligence service of Russia or any other power. The last (and only) FBI employee accused of espionage was Richard Miller, jailed for life in 1986 for passing secrets to the Soviet Union.

The comparative speed with which Mr Nicholson was caught was proclaimed as the dawn of a new era of co-operation between the CIA and the FBI. For Louis Freeh, head of the FBI, and the bureau's chief, the case is the latest in a series of embarrassing setbacks, ranging from its failure to prevent the hijacking of flight TWA 800 to the botched targeting of Edward Jewell as prime suspect in the Atlanta bombing.

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Suicide of 'N Korea missionary'

Diane Targovnik
Associated Press

Tacoma, Washington State — Evan C. Hunziker, the man arrested in August and held for three months by North Korea on spying charges, was found dead yesterday morning in a

motel here — an apparent suicide, police said. Mr Hunziker's body was found in a room at the Olympus Hotel. He had been shot once. The police added that no note was found.

Mr Hunziker, 26, was arrested in late August in North Korea when he illegally en-

tered the country from China. North Korea accused him of spying for South Korea. His relatives, however, maintained he had had a religious awakening while he was jailed in Anchorage, Alaska, and went to Asia to spread the word of his new-found religion.

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Sheriff's man strides out as blizzard rages across the Badlands



Eye of the storm: Sergeant Gary Grove, of the Grand Forks County Sheriff's Department, braves a blizzard which hit North Dakota yesterday. Snow driven by the high winds hampered communications in the region and several travellers were stranded in their vehicles. Photograph: AP/Dan Diederich

Cyprus verdict stuns Turkey

Tony Barber
Europe Editor

In a judgement with potentially far-reaching implications for the Cyprus dispute, the European Court of Human Rights ruled yesterday that Turkey had violated the rights of a Greek Cypriot who lost access to her property after the 1974 Turkish invasion of northern Cyprus.

It was the first time an international court had held Turkey responsible for the consequences of its invasion, which displaced of at least 160,000 Greek Cypriots from the northern third of the island.

"It is a great success. I believe its effects could be enormous," said President Glafcos Clerides, the Greek Cypriot who heads the internationally recognised state of Cyprus. "If we take into account those who were forced to leave their homes, then the effects could be even greater."

The Strasbourg-based court, an arm of the 40-nation Council of Europe, issued its judgement at a time when the United States, Britain and its European Union allies are intensifying efforts to make 1997 the year of a settlement of the Cyprus dispute. There was no immediate reaction from Turkey, but the prospect of a wave of Greek Cypriot legal claims stemming from the court's judgement may stiffen the resolve of the Turkish government and its

Landmark ruling may unleash wave of property claims on troubled island

Turkish Cypriot allies to maintain a hard negotiating stance. Since the Turkish invasion, Cyprus has become an island of two ethnically pure sectors, with only a handful of Greeks left in the north and almost no Turks in the south. Much Greek property in the north has ended up in the hands of Turkish Cypriots or settlers from the Turkish mainland.

The court ruled by 11 votes to six that Turkey had violated the rights of Titina Loizidou, a tourist guide, by denying her access to plots of land that she owned in the northern coastal resort of Kyrenia. She launched her case after being detained by Turkish Cypriot police in 1989 as she entered the Turkish-controlled sector of Nicosia.

Accompanied by a group called "Womeo Walk Home", Ms Loizidou was trying to draw attention to the fate of Greek Cypriots displaced from northern Cyprus in 1974. The Turkish Cypriot authorities later

insisted on her return to the Greek sector of Nicosia.

One vital element of the court's judgement was that Turkey, rather than the self-proclaimed "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", was responsible for what happened to Ms Loizidou. Turkey, which keeps 30,000 troops in northern Cyprus and is the only country to recognise the TRNC, argued that it could not be responsible since the events took place outside the territory of Turkey.

The Council of Europe said in a statement: "In the court's view, it was obvious from the large number of troops engaged to active duties in northern Cyprus that the Turkish army exercised effective overall control there. In the circumstances of the case, this entailed Turkey's responsibility for the policies and actions of the TRNC."

The court dismissed Turkey's argument that it had no authority to consider the case since it related to events before 1990, when Turkey accepted the court's compulsory jurisdiction.

The court deferred judgement on Ms Loizidou's claim for compensation and asked the Turkish government to submit its observations within six months. The court also dismissed her claim that she had lost her home, commenting that she had not been living in Kyrenia at the time.

EU agrees to keep tobacco subsidies

Sarah Helm and
Katherine Butler
Brussels

The European Commission yesterday rejected proposals to end subsidies to tobacco producers, saying that 200,000 workers are dependent on the funds. The decision provoked anger from the anti-smoking lobby, and caused divisions within the Commission itself.

Padraig Flynn, the social affairs commissioner, has called for abolition of the subsidies, arguing that the EU should not be supporting trade which leads to tobacco-related deaths. While the EU spends £800 million a year to support the producers, mostly in Italy and Greece, it is only spending £12 million a year on measures to combat smoking, said Mr Flynn. He reminded his colleagues on the Commission that smoking is now the biggest single avoidable

cause of death in Europe.

However, the majority of commissioners supported a proposal from Franz Fischler, the agriculture commissioner, who said stopping the subsidies would directly affect 135,000 families putting 200,000 people

at risk. He said that stopping the subsidies would not stop smoking, but would cause economic hardship. Given that approximately 77 per cent of tobacco consumed in the EU is imported, the regime's abolition would merely lead to 100 per cent of EU tobacco demand being met by imports, said a Commission spokesman.

The Commission did decide to reform its subsidies programme by targeting aid on higher-quality tobacco. Proposals to consider strengthening cigarette packet health warnings were also agreed, as were proposals to consider reducing tar and nicotine content.

"It's a stepping stone in the right direction but it doesn't go anywhere near as far as we would have preferred," said Andrew Hayes, of the Association of European Cancer Leagues.

Rejection by the Commission of the industry's complete abolition of the subsidies, especially in the form of a "voluntary" agreement, was a "victory" for the industry, said Philip Morris, the American industry giant, mounted what EU officials described as an "incredible" campaign. It is understood the company even enlisted a number of former agriculture commissioners to put its case forward.

While the industry may face new anti-smoking curbs through stricter labelling, and eventually measures to impose new limits on cigarette tar and nicotine content levels, tobacco growing subsidies will continue to benefit the cigarette makers.

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Irving Caesar

"I write fast", maintained the lyricist Irving Caesar. "Sometimes lousy - but always fast."

During his song life he dashed off the words for such standard songs as "Swanee", "Animal Crackers in My Soup", "Just a Gigolo", "Is It True What They Say About Dixie?" and "Tea for Two". The words of the last-named song were fluke: Caesar wrote them late one night as a "dummy lyric", just putting down the first came into his head to remind himself of the shape of Vincent Youmans' tune: "Picture you upon my knee, / Tea for two and two for tea, / Me for you and you for me, / Alone..."

"I was going to write the real lyric in the morning," he said. "But while I was still asleep, Youmans found what I'd scribbled, liked it, and that was that." In 1933 the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers selected "Tea for Two" as one of 16 songs making up its All-Time Hit Parade.

Irving Caesar wrote verse and song lyrics as a child, but trained as a stenographer at New York's City College. In that capacity, he worked with Henry Ford's doomed Peace Mission to Europe during the First World War. Towards the end of the war, Caesar returned to America to begin his songwriting career. In 1918, when "Hindustan" was a popular one-step, he and George Gershwin met for lunch in New York to discuss future collaboration. Caesar suggested they write a one-step of their own, and the result was "Swanee", which they completed within hours.

The following year, it was sung in the stage show at New York's newest cinema, the Capitol, and then danced to by 60 chorus girls with electric lights on their shoes. The song came into its own in 1918, when Al Jolson sang it in one of his legendary Sunday night concerts. The reaction was so enthusiastic, Jolson interpolated the song into his show *Sinbad*, after which his recorded version sold over two million copies.

The success of "Swanee" opened many doors for Caesar, but the songs he co-wrote for such shows as *Morris Greer's Midnight Whirl* and *The Sweetheart Shop* (both 1920) aroused little excitement. "Sixty Seconds Every Minute", which he and Louis Hirsch wrote for the 1922 edition of *The Greenwich Village Follies*, was a popular hit, but nothing he wrote for the next three editions of the revue was successful.

He had a hit with "Gigolette" (music by Franz Lehár) in *André Chouart's Revue of 1925*, and a huge success that same year with his lyrics for *No, No, Nanette*, for which he and Vincent Youmans wrote such standards as "I Want to Be Happy", "Too Many Rings Around Rosie", "You Can Dance With Any Girl at All", the title song and, of course, "Tea for Two". A follow-up show *Yes, Yes, Yes* (1927), which Caesar wrote with the composer Ben Jerome, ran only 40 performances.

Caesar felt "Yes" might have been a hit had he been allowed to interpolate "Sometimes I'm Happy" into the score, but Youmans, with whom he'd written the song, refused to allow this. In the spring of 1927, Caesar returned from a long stay in Europe to find



Caesar: "Tea for two"

everyone whispering "Sometimes I'm Happy", which Youmans had interpolated into his then current musical *Hit the Deck!* without asking his lyricist's permission. "I gave Youmans two choices," Caesar remembered with satisfaction. "Get himself a new lyric for the song, or pay through the nose, giving me huge royalties for every single company of the show - and it was playing everywhere. The song was already a smash with my words, so I got the royalties."

Although *Here's How* (1928) was a quick Broadway flop, it produced "Crazy Rhythm", a big song with music by Roger Wolfe Kahn. Caesar also wrote with such composers as Victor Herbert, Sigmund Romberg, Rudolf Friml, and Oscar Levant. With the latter, he wrote "Lady, Play Your Mandoline", which boasts the gaily line: "Senorita, sweet Chiquita, I could eat your heart."

In 1930 Caesar wrote an English lyric for "Schöner Gigolo", a Viennese melody. "Just a Gigolo" was recorded successfully by Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong and Vincent Lopez's orchestra, and revived in the 1960s by the Louis Prima band.

In the mid-1930s Caesar worked with the composer Ray Henderson on two films for 20th Century Fox: George White's *Scandals* (1934), which produced Alice Faye's successful song "Oh, You Nasty Man!", and *Curly Top* (1935), which produced Shirley Temple's "The Little White Horse".

Having smashed through Belsen's gates and the first building he came to, scattering guards in all directions, Daniell found a trench 150 yards long filled with naked bodies; he then broke down the door of the camp hospital, in which 90 per cent of the patients were dead. "The sight and the smell were completely appalling; they were all naked and many of them no doubt had typhus." In the next two buildings he visited lay hundreds of skeletal people in the last stages of starvation. Hearing shots, he went to the perimeter where he found a group of would-be escapees being tortured on the spot by six Hitler Youth. He shot four of them. Daniell was sure that he never lost his self-control, but that was the closest he came to it.

Brought up in Anglesey and schooled in Norfolk, Bob Daniell was very much a countryman: The lure of the wild things, fur or feather, these ways and these men remained with me all of my life. In the best of the Indian jungles I thrilled in the cough of a leopard, and later stood like a stone at the full-bodied roar of a hungry lion resounded around me, to be answered by the wicked scream of an old bull elephant with the limitless African bush



The sight and the smell were completely appalling: Daniell, given two hours to investigate a suspicious group of buildings on 19 April 1945, discovered the concentration camp at Belsen

Brigadier Robert Daniell

The discovery of Belsen in April 1945 when he rammed his tank through the gates of the camp was Robert Daniell's worst experience in a war in which he saw front-line action in North Africa, France (during the Normandy landings), Belgium, Holland and northern Germany, and was promoted on the battlefield three times, twice mentioned in dispatches and awarded two DSOs.

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stretching out to the distant horizon. Years later in the days of war the ability to become an unrecognisable object was to stand me in good stead. When man was hunting man, it was the first one who shot who survived.

Daniell passed out of the Royal Military Academy in 1920, second in his class, and after a period with the 1st Battery, Royal Artillery (The Blazers), during which he became an enthusiastic jockey, was posted to India, where Montgomery was his battery captain. He returned to England in 1928.

In 1929 he received his "jack-et" and was posted to the 3rd Regiment Royal Horse Artillery. Then followed a period of high days and holidays during which his horse won the Grand Military Gold Cup in 1933, and he rode to victory himself in the Gunner Gold Cup at Sandown twice, in 1934 and 1935. He became Adjutant of the Westmorland and Cumberland Yeomanry before rejoining his regiment late in 1937 and leaving for Palestine.

Early in June 1942, after collecting what was left of his men and guns, Daniell was ordered forward from the Gazala Bir Hachem minefield, to put up a barrage in a futile attempt to discourage German movement northwards. Dawn broke as the regiment was topping a rise and they were met by a hail of shells. Caught on a stony ridge, they became surrounded by German tanks. Casualties were heavy. Daniell and his men could not move, and their orders were precise: stand firm where they were to the moment the last round was fired.

For two days the situation deteriorated. Having collapsed with fatigue Daniell awoke to find a German staff car beside him with two generals in it. He leapt up to the running board but was dislodged when the staff officer hit him over the eye with his map case. All the vehicles were burning as he walked over to the remaining gun that seemed intact. As a Mark VI appeared out of the smoke a gunner loaded the 25-pounder for him and he fired at point-blank range. The tank was destroyed but Daniell had been seen and machine-gun fire was heavy. Daniell rolled into the smoke of a burning vehicle as German infantry overran the position. In an hour it would be dark, and the noise of battle subsided. Untouched, Daniell climbed into his 8cwt truck, still miraculously serviceable, evaded four Mark VI tanks and headed south for the open desert. The wheels were blown away by an 88mm machine gun, and a German sergeant shouted to him to join his post. Daniell walked off into the dark with his water bottle and the sergeant didn't open fire. Several days later, in very poor shape, he was picked up by the sole survivor of the Battle of the Cauldron, by Gerald Grosvenor, a friend, in his tank.

After the battle of El Alamein Montgomery offered him the command of 3rd RHA. Roscoe Harvey also came up with his 4th Light Armoured Brigade, and Daniell remained with him until they reached the Baltic at Lübeck two years later. The pursuit of Rommel was to continue until May 1943 when Tunisia was relieved and the North Africa Campaign was over. It was during that campaign that Daniell won his first DSO.

On his return to England in July 1943 he was given command of the 13th HAC, RHA. There was little time to prepare for the invasion of which they were so soon to be a part. Only the toughest of fights enabled the 11th Armoured Division, commanded by Harvey, to break out from the Normandy beach-head. Operation Goodwood got three armoured divisions across the Orne near Caen and Quatre Bras was taken in spite of heavy casualties. There was savage fighting close to Paris; then they swept on to

Amiens and Brussels and eventually Antwerp, averaging 53 miles a day. The advance into Holland, and on to Arnhem, was slower with lines of communication stretched to the limit.

It was on 19 April 1945 that Daniell passed a group of buildings, some railway wagons, and an archway of laurels guarded by Romanians. Having earlier seen similar wagons in Normandy, when he had liberated a train-load of Jews bound for Germany, his suspicions were aroused and he asked Harvey for permission to investigate; he was given two hours. Driving his tank through the gate he discovered Belsen. It was the only concentration camp to be liberated by the British army.

Although the campaign in northern Europe was shorter than in the desert the fighting was intense and fierce; here Daniell won his second DSO.

At last the division reached Lübeck. Orders were received to proceed to Kiel, and in one of the last acts of the war Bob Daniell single-handedly captured the crew of the scuttled U-boat 141, whom he found hiding in a barn.

After the war he remained in the Army with commands in Norfolk and Kent, until he was appointed to the Sovereign's Body Guard in 1951. He served as a Gentleman at Arms for 20 years.

William de Segomado



Gentleman at Arms: Daniell in old age

Photograph: Tom Pileston

Eulace Peacock

It is one of sport's, indeed history's, great might-have-beens. Had not a electrifying young black American sprinter and long-jumper badly torn his right hamstring in the spring of 1936, the Berlin Olympics that year might today be remembered not for the feats of Jesse Owens, but for those of Eulace Peacock.

The mid-Thirties were an earlier golden age of American track and field, and no rivalry was greater or more friendly than that of Owens and Peacock. Both were born in racist

space of 45 minutes. He seemed invincible - at least for six weeks until the national amateur championships in July when Peacock first beat him in the 100 metres in a wind-aided wind record time of 10.2 seconds, and then captured the long jump with a leap of 26ft 3in.

That year, out of 10 track and long-jump meetings with Owens, Peacock won seven, and in the 100 metres did not lose to him over the three years until his hamstring went, just before the 1936 Olympic trials. "What can

you do?" he said later. "I couldn't shed any tears, it happened and that was it... Sure I was disappointed, but you can't spend your life thinking about what might have been." What might have been, in the view of his peers, was one if not both sprint titles in Berlin, and a second black athlete to destroy the Hitlerian myth of Aryan supremacy.

Although Peacock continued running with huge success after 1936, his moment was lost. The Second World War, in which he served as a Coast Guard, prevented the Olympics of 1940 and 1944, and by the time of the London games in 1948, he was far past his best. Thereafter he kept in touch with the sport by officiating as a judge at athletics meetings.

Such was his friendship with Owens that the two jointly owned a wholesale meat packing business in Harlem and the Bronx, before Owens died of lung cancer in 1980. Seven years later, Peacock was belatedly elected into America's Track and Field Hall of Fame, but the last years of his life were marred by Alzheimer's disease. Denied gold medals and the role of hero at the most infamous Olympics ever, his true legacy is a tribute to Owens. "Eulace, when we were running, I got to the point I couldn't beat you. I could beat them all, but not you."

Rupert Corwell

Eulace Peacock, athlete; born Dothan, Alabama 27 August 1914; died Yorkers, New York 13 December 1996.

Announcements for Gazette BIRTHS, MARRIAGES & DEATHS (BIRTHS, Adoptions, Marriages, Deaths, Memorial services, Wedding announcements, Memorials) should be sent in writing to the Gazette Editor, The Independent, 11, Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 3DL. Telephone 0171 493 9121. 124-hour answering machine 0171 493 2923 or faxed to 0171 493 2910, and are charged at £2.50 a line (VAT extra). OTHER Gazette announcements (weddings, funerals, funeral notices, marriages) must be submitted in writing (or faxed) and are charged at £10 a line, VAT extra. They should be accompanied by a daytime telephone number.

Wills
Diane Catherine Mary Hall, of Buckfastleigh, Devon, General Secretary of the Royal College of Nursing (1957-82), left estate valued at £528,432 net. Nancy Louise of Sherfield Hill, Hampshire, left estate valued at £2,317,129 net.

Anniversaries
Deaths: Andreas Olander (Hosmann), religious reformer, 1498; Philip V, King of Spain, 1683; Sir William Edward Parry, Arctic explorer, 1791; John Elk, violinist and writer, 1802; Jean-Baptiste Charles Dancie, violinist, 1818; Albert Abraham Michelson, physicist, 1852; Sir Stanley Urwin, publisher, 1884; Thomas Godfrey Pribon Corbett, Second Baron Rowallan, Chief Scout, 1895; Oliver Hazard Perry La Farge, author, 1901; Sir Ralph David Richardson, actor, 1902; Leonid Rylov Brezhnev, Soviet leader, 1906; Jean Genet, playwright and essayist, 1910; Edith Piaf (Edith Piaf-Gassion), singer, 1915; Deaths: Anastasius I, Pope, 401; Matteo Maria Bavardo, poet, 1494; Vitus Jonassen Berling, navigator, 1741; Jean-Baptiste Vanloo, painter, 1743; Fred-

RIYAL ENGAGEMENTS
The Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Charles of Wales, and the Duchess of Edinburgh, Princess Diana, will be married on 29 July 1981 at St Mark's Church, Cambridge. The Duke of York, Prince Andrew, and the Duchess of York, Princess Sarah, will be married on 13 July 1981 at St Mark's Church, Cambridge. The Duke of Gloucester, Prince Edward, and the Duchess of Gloucester, Princess Sophie, will be married on 13 July 1981 at St Mark's Church, Cambridge. The Duke of Kent, Prince Michael, and the Duchess of Kent, Princess Sophie, will be married on 13 July 1981 at St Mark's Church, Cambridge.

Birthdays
Sir Anthony Buck OC, former MP, 68; Mr Roy Buckland, chief executive Unigate, 54; Mr Timothy Eggar MP, Minister of State, Trade and Industry, 45; The Right Rev Ian Harland, Bishop of Carlisle, 64; Brigadier Lewis Harris, cartographer, 86; Sir Brian Hill, former chairman, Higgs & Hill, 64; Mr Syd Little, comedian, 54; Mr Robert Ponsford, former Controller of Music, BBC, 69; The Marquess of Queensberry, former professor of ceramics at the Royal College of Art, 67; Dr David Boyle-Beddoe, chairman, Welsh Development Agency, 59; Sir David Rowe-Ham, former Lord Mayor of London, 61; Lord Weir, a Senator of the College of Justice in Scotland, 65; Mr Tony Wheeler, founder, Lonely Planet travel guides, 50; Mr Maurice White, rock singer, 55.

Anniversaries
Deaths: Andreas Olander (Hosmann), religious reformer, 1498; Philip V, King of Spain, 1683; Sir William Edward Parry, Arctic explorer, 1791; John Elk, violinist and writer, 1802; Jean-Baptiste Charles Dancie, violinist, 1818; Albert Abraham Michelson, physicist, 1852; Sir Stanley Urwin, publisher, 1884; Thomas Godfrey Pribon Corbett, Second Baron Rowallan, Chief Scout, 1895; Oliver Hazard Perry La Farge, author, 1901; Sir Ralph David Richardson, actor, 1902; Leonid Rylov Brezhnev, Soviet leader, 1906; Jean Genet, playwright and essayist, 1910; Edith Piaf (Edith Piaf-Gassion), singer, 1915; Deaths: Anastasius I, Pope, 401; Matteo Maria Bavardo, poet, 1494; Vitus Jonassen Berling, navigator, 1741; Jean-Baptiste Vanloo, painter, 1743; Fred-

Lectures
Victoria and Albert Museum: Pippo Sanguis, "Early Silver for Dining and Display", 7.30pm.
Tate Gallery: Simon Morley, "The Constructed Vision: abstract art between the wars", 7pm.
British Museum: Hilary Williams, "Queen Mary's Collection of Christmas and New Year Cards", 1.15pm.
National Gallery: Gabriele Fimidi, Neil MacGregor, Colin Wiggins,

Dinners
Air Force Board
Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Graydon, Chief of the Air Staff, presided at a dinner held yesterday evening by the Air Force Board Standing Committee in the Mezzanine Suite of the RAF Club, London W1, to mark the retirement of Air Marshal Sir Roger Austin, Controller Aircraft.

Schools
Sherborne School International Study Centre
The Headmaster of Sherborne School has announced the appointment of Dr Christopher Greenfield as the Principal of the International Study Centre, from September 1997. Dr Greenfield, currently Headmaster of Sidcot School, takes over from Mr Ralph Mowat, who retires after 17 years.

Spent convictions admissible in evidence
LAW REPORT
19 December 1996
Thomas V Commissioner of Police of the Metropolitan Court of Appeal (Sir Richard Scott, Vice-Chancellor, Lord Justice Evans, Lord Justice Seville) 28 November 1996
It was a matter for the discretion of the trial judge whether a plaintiff's spent convictions should be admitted in evidence under section 7(3) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974.
The Court of Appeal dismissed an appeal by the plaintiff, Gabriel Thomas, against the decision of Sir Michael Davies, sitting as a High Court judge on 8 March 1995.
The plaintiff, a limbo dancer of considerable reputation, was arrested at 2 am on the morning of 28 May 1990, as he left the stage door after giving a charity performance at the London Arena in Docklands, and was charged with threatening behaviour. He claimed he was subjected to abusive and racist remarks, brutally man-handled and arrested without lawful cause. The arresting officers denied this and denied they had used excessive force.
The plaintiff was tried for the offence of threatening behaviour and was acquitted. He then sued the police claiming dam-

ages for assault, damage to property, false imprisonment and malicious prosecution.
At the trial his action before the judge and a jury, the question was raised, in the jury's absence, whether two previous convictions of the plaintiff could be put to him in cross-examination. One, from 1980, was for unlawful wounding, the other, from 1983, for criminal damage. Both convictions were spent for the purposes of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974 so that, by virtue of section 4 of that Act, they could not be admitted unless they fell within the exceptions provided for by sections 7 and 8. Section 7 provided:

(3) If at any stage in any proceedings before a judicial authority in Great Britain... the authority is satisfied, in the light of any considerations which appear to it to be relevant... that justice cannot be done in the case except by admitting or requiring evidence relating to a person's spent convictions... that authority may admit... the evidence...
The judge allowed the evidence to be admitted on the ground that the plaintiff gave the impression of being well spoken and respectable and in view of his convictions that might leave the jury with a false impression of his reliability and credibility.
Lord Gifford QC and Paul Kishore (Harris & Co, Southwark) for the plaintiff Jonathan Loader (Metropolitan Police Solicitor) for the commission.
Lord Justice Evans said that section 7(3) was expressed as a qualification to the general rule of exclusion in section 4(1) and there was a strong presumption against permitting cross-examination or admitting the evidence, but the section also emphasised that the discretion was a broad one.
The judge might take into account "any considerations which appear... to be relevant", and the overriding requirement was that "justice shall be done".
The question raised by section 7(3) had to be answered by the judge although it was not a matter of law, nor could it be answered by logic or by any process of reasoning alone. A negative answer would be required where the previous conviction was so obviously ir-

Paul Magrath, Barrister

0171 493 9121

The gloves come off in the playground scrap

Hark, amid the sound of Christmas sleigh-bells comes the sound of playground bickering. That, at least, will be the verdict of most of the public on this week's wrangles at Westminster. The fact that voting agreements between the political parties broke down to recriminations from all sides will seem to most people like just another boys' game.

But the parliamentary games that politicians play are not all to be sneered at. It would be easy to recoil in squeamish distaste at the tactics that these professional politicians are starting to exploit. But we cannot dismiss out of hand the escapades this week. Events at Westminster reflect important and real political tensions between the parties that must stand before us next year and ask for our votes.

On the surface, the playground analogy is rather appealing. Parliament is run most of the time according to unwritten rules that everyone obeys. A certain amount of agreement and co-operation between the parties is essential if anything is to be done, and if MPs are not to waste their time and energy running pointless circles around each other. "Fairing" is one of those rituals: parties match their MPs who want to miss the vote, so absent votes cancel each other out. Such rituals are necessary to oil the parliamentary process.

But, as the election draws closer, those agreements are grinding down.

On Monday night the Conservatives won the vote by more than expected, by deceiving the opposition parties about how many Tory MPs would be absent. Caught red-handed, ministers cheerily denied everything and muddled the waters by making false accusations against Labour's whips in return. Not surprisingly, in response, Labour and the Liberal Democrats have announced that they will not be pairing MPs with absent Tories in the new year. Tilt for predictable tilt.

The animosity is personal, too. The bi-weekly dispatch box encounters between Tony Blair and John Major have taken on a vitriolic tone in recent weeks. The sneering tone with which the Prime Minister patronises and accuses the Labour leader is undignified. Contempt oozes from every pore. But Mr Major can't quite carry it off. Admonishing Mr Blair for being unable to "understand the situation on beef", for example, is rich coming from a Government that has changed direction on beef so many times that none of us are sure what the Government is up to - if it knows itself.

But when all is said and done, it does seem childish, all this indignation and cheating. Recounting their squabbles, the politicians seem like over-excited children, screaming because the end of the game is in sight. Don't be misled. It's serious. Underlying the spat are two important facts: the Government lost its majority in Parliament this week, and

the Conservative Party is too fractured and fractious to hold together reliably under pressure. The loss of its majority reflects the public sentiment. The fractures in the party reveal tensions and problems in their ability to run an effective Government. These are not trivial troubles; they go to the heart of politics.

In the circumstances, an opposition party that truly believes in itself and its ability to govern has a responsibility to try to bring the Government down at the earliest opportunity. And a party that really thinks - as Labour claims to do - that it has a better vision for the country, should not flinch from parliamentary

tactics that help to win the wider battle.

If that means dragging debates on into the middle of the night, holding votes at strange hours, proposing sabotage amendments, and doing whatever it takes to harry and harass ministers into making mistakes, then so be it. These are the circumstances in which that master of parliamentary procedure, Dennis Skinner, should really come into his own.

There is nothing unfair or underhand about this kind of strategy. If John Major's government proved cool-headed, calm and competent, an opposition guerrilla war would have little

impact. All Labour and the Liberal Democrats would achieve is pressure on existing weaknesses and strains within the Government, legitimately testing its real mettle in difficult times.

That is what the Opposition should be doing - but it is not. Instead, this week the Government fired the first shots. When battle intensified at the personal and party level, it was the Tories who started it. Labour and the Liberal Democrats were too squeamish to begin the fight, too ready to pull punches, too unwilling to go for the Government's throat. Maybe now things will be different. Maybe the startling deceit and brazen lies by the Conservative whips' office will provoke the Opposition into a little ferocity. Perhaps Mr Major's patronising personal attacks will inspire a little fury in Tony Blair. Not before time. Labour needs to learn how to play parliamentary hard ball to demonstrate to all of us that it has the appetite for power, and deserves to govern.

All these macho metaphors are unfortunate. We use them with great self-consciousness and a strong awareness that important issues can get lost in the heat of the fight. Parties which are sensitive to voters will avoid taking guerrilla tactics on to the streets, knowing that none of this goes down well with voters already badly disaffected with yab-boo politics. Nevertheless, politicians cannot stick to pleasant abstract chats with voters while ignoring the unpleasant realities of the parliamentary cockpit. Substantive arguments about different policies and priorities are important. But until our present political system is reformed, Parliament remains the theatre in which those differences are fought out. In the end, this battle matters, because two party leaders are fighting for the right to decide which one determines our national future on one of the biggest issues of the day: our future in Europe. Parliament, whether we like it or not, is the proving ground.

A girl-friendly computer game?

Surprise, surprise: girls are turned off by computers. Gender equality in information technology is decades away if their antipathy to video games and the Internet lasts into later life. Women may miss out on a growing segment of modern life. But, wait, is that a dashing woman coming to the rescue? One of this Christmas's smash hit computer games is PlayStation's "Tombs Raider", and its central character is the undeniably female Lara Croft - the first woman action hero. With her guns and big bust she is, it's true, somewhat stereotyped. But if she can help break down the maleness of computer gaming, let's give Lara a warm welcome.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Blair can save Europe from nationalists

Sir: The leader of the Labour Party has intoned the mantra of "standing up for British interests" in the European Union ("I'll use the Euro veto," says Blair, 16 December). This implies that our interests are different from those of Europe. They are not.

The EU faces acute dangers on several fronts. First, the rise of nationalism and xenophobia, which is shamelessly encouraged by the majority of the press in the UK, by much of the Conservative Party and by far-right groups throughout Europe.

Secondly, the threat of stagnation and decline in Eastern Europe, where the EU must encourage trade and the continued political and economic development which will facilitate the eastern enlargement of the Union.

Thirdly, unemployment, currently at 22.5 per cent across the Union. A co-ordinated European initiative, encompassing a well-constructed Economic and Monetary Union, is the only sensible suggestion on offer for creating jobs. Employment deregulation would not be enough.

The United Kingdom has much to offer in all these areas and much to gain. A future British government must fully engage in ensuring the sound construction of EMU, Monetary Union and an effective European Central Bank might even succeed in breaking the hegemony of the City and banking interests in the United Kingdom, for so long short-termist and anti-industry.

Furthermore, the next government should assist in improving the democratic accountability and effectiveness of decision-making in the Union. Hitherto the British government has been uniquely obstructionist, which is hardly surprising from the most centralised state in the industrialised world.

The Labour Party must not make the same mistakes as the Conservatives in perpetuating an "us and them" view of Europe. A huge effort is required to win back the initiative from the nationalist right and the anti-Europeans. If Blair is afraid to take up the challenge, then at best Britain is heading for marginalisation, a further decline in our international role and no say whatsoever in the development of the European Union. At worst, we may act as midwife to a process of European disintegration. Only those with an Alice in Wonderland view of the world and a total blind spot for European history can welcome the prospect.

SIMON SWEENEY
Senior Lecturer in European Integration Studies,
University College of Ripon and York
St John
York

Sir: John Lichfield hits several nails on the head in his excellent essay on European Union enlargement to Eastern Europe ("Europe: how the East was lost", 16 December). Unless there is fundamental reform of the EU's institutions and policies, enlargement could be "botched or abandoned".

However, it needs to be spelled out more clearly that it will be the financial cost of enlargement that determines whether the process goes ahead or not.

In Strasbourg recently the European Parliament voted on a



Budget Committee report concerning this subject, concluding that if enlargement is to work, current member states must be committed to paying for it. Unfortunately, this means not just reforming the CAP and structural funds, but also facing up to the fact that extra cash needs to be found if the EU budget is to be able to sustain enlargement.

Grandiose political pronouncements in Dublin and elsewhere have failed to answer the real question: what price enlargement? For as long as member states' governments fail to address this issue, any promises they make to the countries of Eastern Europe are empty ones.

TERRY WYNN MEP
Socialist Group Spokesperson on
Budgetary Affairs,
European Parliament
Brussels

Sir: Noting Sarah Helm's article on Cootinental scepticism towards the European Union ("The British have been led to believe only they are sceptical about Europe", 12 December), I was most surprised to discover that British support for the EU had risen to 43 per cent in the wake of the heft crisis.

I come from a region that has been bled white over decades of lack of British inward investment; a region that has benefited greatly from recent economic support from Brussels. I am grateful to discover that I am increasingly not alone in welcoming wider European integration, despite the destabilising effect of the euro.

Caught between a farming industry that thinks it perfectly acceptable to feed the ground-up

remains of diseased sheep off to animals (and then become totally absent-minded about it) and a prevaricating British government, I must be one of many British citizens who increasingly look to Brussels for protection from these appalling people.

DAVID R. BARRY
Liverpool

Sir: May I use your columns to say how handsome I find the new euro banknotes ("Dusk in dawn for Europe", 14 December)? I do understand and sympathise with the distress which they must be causing British nationalists - all this symbolism of bridges between nations, and all that foreign architecture and those foreign historical periods.

ERIC C. ELSTON
London E1

would not suggest the erection of a slavish replica on the St Pancras site.

Nevertheless, if it is intended to go ahead with the present plans for the Reading Room, the interior furniture and fittings should be carefully removed and incorporated in a new structure forming an annex to the British Library. Here they could continue to perform a useful function with a degree of dignity which we fear will be missing in the revamped original.

MALCOLM CAMPBELL
Chairman
Camden Civic Society
London NW1

Rightist Catholic converts beware

Sir: It was good to see Jack O'Sullivan getting the rush to the Roman Catholic Church by the Anglican right into perspective ("The resurrection that never was", 10 December).

One cannot question their personal motives, but they will not find the Church the safe haven they imagine. At a personal level, as a Roman Catholic myself, I think we should have women priests; I frequently share communion with Anglican friends; I think celibacy for priests should be an option; and I think we should have radical options for the poor. I would guess I am not alone.

Moreover, at a structural level, the authority of the Church is

steadily being questioned or disregarded by its own members. Contraception is a debate for the theologians, not the laity. They have already voted tacitly with small nuclear families, or by their absence from the confessional, and of course the priests and hierarchy know it.

The central authority of Rome, and the orthodoxies at the papal centre too, are continually under question in Western Europe, the United States and South America - which points to a real as opposed to a fake subsidiarity slowly taking place. Right-wing assertiveness will not do, nor the deferential bowing in the administrative and doctrinal structures of the Church.

Presumably right-wing political refugees see some comfort in the Roman Church's religious stances of the far right - but beware, beware: we have a middle ground and a far left, too.

Mr T. W. MESSENGER
Hove, Sussex

Dollar linked to pieces of eight

Sir: Sara Clarke's explanation for the origin of the \$ sign (letter, 18 December) may be appealing, but is only partially correct; the real explanation is equally appealing and more romantic.

The name comes from the German coin the *Joachimstaler*, named for Joachimsthal (Joachim Valley) in Bohemia, where they were first minted in 1519.

The name was abbreviated to *thaler* and then turned into its Dutch form, *daler*, before entering English as "dollar" before 1600 and becoming the common English name for the peso or eight-real coin, better known as the "piece of eight".

Popular with Long John Silver, the piece of eight was the common currency of Spain and its American colonies, and had come into general use throughout the British colonies of North America by the time of the American Revolution in 1776. (Proof, by the way, that sharing a currency with others does not preclude independence!)

The dollar sign thus evolved from the ouermal "8". The Mexicans use this same \$ sign for their modern currency, still called the peso.

JIM MANGLES
Worham, Suffolk

Sir: The \$ sign did not begin life as a river running between two banks. It started as a xenogram, a foreign word written as such but pronounced as if it were English. You wrote "peso" but you said "dollar".

"Pesos" was abbreviated as "ps", and this abbreviation was gradually formalised into the present ligature. In the same way we write £ (an ornate L for Latin *libra*) but say "pound", or write & (an ornate figure of Latin *et*) but say "and".

In the 18th century the Spanish peso was the most frequent high-value coin in circulation in British North America and "dollar" (from the German *thaler*) was colloquial English for any foreign coin of substance.

Professor MAURICE POPE
Oxford

Young killer did not seek publicity

Sir: As the solicitor who represented Learco Chindamo during his recent trial for the murder of Philip Lawrence, I have noted with concern the publication of what purports to be an interview with him in *The Sunday Times*, and the subsequent reaction to that article ("Interview with head's killer angers MP", *The Independent*, 16 December).

One can well understand the public anxiety which has been engendered by what appears to be an attempt by Chindamo to court media attention. I would like to set the record straight.

Before, during and after the trial, Chindamo's family has been continually harassed and pursued by journalists, notwithstanding their clear and determined refusal to make any comment. In accordance with Chindamo's wishes, those of us who represented his interests refused numerous opportunities to speak publicly on his behalf.

Last week a journalist managed to bypass security arrangements and persuaded Chindamo, who is a 16-year-old of low intelligence, to speak to him on the telephone from custody. The result was the publication in *The Sunday Times* of what claimed to be an accurate record of an interview with Chindamo; this article has prompted suggestions that Chindamo has provided himself with a public platform.

He has in fact never sought any contact with the press, either directly or indirectly. He and his family have always resisted any temptation that there may have been to correct inaccuracies in reports which concern them, and continue to do so.

The irresponsible journalism which led to the publication of the recent article in *The Sunday Times* deserves censure through the columns of your newspaper.

CAMILLA LOEWE
Hodge Jones & Allen
London NW1

Women abuse too

Sir: Emma Kay (letters, 14 December) seeks to protect children in care by refusing to employ men in children's homes. She states that females "very rarely" abuse children.

The NSPCC (*Child Abuse Trends in England & Wales for 1988-90*) reports mothers as committing 12.5 per cent of known cases of sexual abuse in "non-broken" homes. This is a lot of women.

Belief that women "very rarely" abuse children often prevents complaints being investigated, so the true figures may be worse.

HENRY BUNBURY
London N8

Artful dodge

Sir: The £3m deficit at the Royal Academy is indeed a mere trifle and should be eliminated immediately by asking all RAs to put paint to canvas: one stroke of their expensive brushes should solve this.

Also, the Summer Exhibition could be sited at two or three additional locations (Bristol, Bradford, Glasgow) and all the paintings sold on a sealed-tender basis, with all sums above estimated value going to Academy funds.

I like simple solutions from the school of naive accounting.

RICHARD ROBINSON
Bath

argument

Europe's where the action is

by Kenneth Clarke

Why did we join the European Community in 1973, the European Union today? Ours must be the only country where, nearly a quarter of a century after accession, that question still needs to be asked.

For those of us who can recall the 1950s and 1960s, the experience of missing the boat – being locked out, and then eventually getting in only after many of the key decisions had already been taken by others – has shaped our whole attitude to Europe.

Today we are becoming prey to a mythology that we joined only an economic community, with no serious political dimension, and that the purpose of our membership was uniquely economic. That is not the case. Our motives were political to the extent that, as Macmillan put it at the time, through membership "this country would not only gain a new stature in Europe, but also increase its standing and influence in the councils of the world". Unless the UK joined, "the realities of power would compel our American friends to attach increasing weight to the views and interests of the Six in Europe ... and to pay less attention to our own ... To lose influence both to Europe and Washington, as this must mean, would seriously undermine our international position."

The political dimension of the European Community we entered in 1973 had a second component, above and beyond maximising our influence in world affairs. It involved the explicit pooling of some legal sovereignty in limited and specific areas set down in the Treaty of Rome. This was a conscious political decision, and its full implications were discussed extensively in Parliament in debates during 1971-72, in which I listened for hours in my role as a government whip.

Economics did, however, feature large in our reasons for joining. The economic rationale

was very powerful indeed. We knew that access to a much larger market, the absence of internal tariffs, and the removal of non-tariff barriers would give our business the chance to enjoy economies of scale on a truly continental scale – and our consumers access to a wider choice of goods at more competitive prices. The single market programme of the 1980s, to complete the common market of the 1960s, has made that a reality, and enabled our people today to reap the benefits of a far-sighted economic policy.

The result is that today, 60 per cent of our trade in goods, and over half of all our trade, is transacted with other EU states. That compares with 40 per cent of our trade when we joined. Since 1973, the growth in UK exports to EU states has been twice as rapid as to the rest of the world. Today, Britain's visible exports to Germany alone equal those to the United States and Japan combined. We export more to France than to the Commonwealth, and more to the Netherlands than to all the newly industrialised Asian countries put together. Supplying the European market has become a key motor of British prosperity.

And to those who claim that, throughout all this, our trade deficit with the EU has widened, the facts actually prove the opposite. As a share of GDP, the UK's trade deficit with our EU partners has shrunk since we joined, not grown, even though our overall trade with these countries has more or less doubled.

The clear pattern over the past quarter century has become one of growing British economic interdependence with the EU, and also of growing economic convergence with our partners. For many years, we were falling behind France and Germany in living standards. That process has now been reversed. Over the last cycle, our output growth per head outpaced that of both countries. And in manufacturing performance the improve-

ment been more spectacular still. In the 1970s our manufacturing productivity grew at half the rate of France and Germany. In the 1980s and 1990s, we have exceeded it.

We are beginning to match the stability achieved by our most successful partners in their general economic management, and we in turn are leading the way as a model for liberalising, supply-side reform.

But UK membership of the world's largest single market-place has been of vital importance in enabling us to obtain the full benefits of that liberalising reform. Since the major strides made in completing the single market, Britain now has a tailor-made homebase of more than 370 million of the world's richest and most demanding consumers on its doorstep. In value terms the single market is one and a quarter times the size of the US market, and two and a half times the size of that of Japan.

Here in Britain, our domestic market is now the European market. However much we may like to criticise Europe in this country, every sensible Briton needs Europe's customers, and knows that he or she depends on them for their prosperity.

Ironically, as we engage in a seemingly endless political debate over our role in Europe, the economic debate is largely over. Business sees that Europe is where the action is commercially, and consumers see it, too. Europe offers us a growing opportunity to excel economically, and the best is yet to come.

It is precisely because the United Kingdom has been engaged in radical supply-side reform, charting a path which others now have to follow, that we have managed to get ahead of the game. With a more flexible labour market, more dereg-

ulated product markets, a larger and more efficient capital market, a smaller state sector, as well as lower corporate and personal taxes than any of our principal European competitors, Britain now stands in an ideal situation to draw real economic gains from the continental market which we have helped build.

The continuing success of the UK as a centre of inward investment is a striking illustration of the enterprise-friendly environment we have been fostering. In the single market, Britain has now been the largest recipient of non-EU investment for several years. Some 40 per cent of Japanese and US investment in Europe, and 50 per cent of South Korean investment, comes to Britain. During the 1990s, the UK has received as much inward investment as Germany, France and Italy combined. The total inward investment stock in the UK from all sources now stands at more than £150bn. It has brought about 700,000 jobs to the UK since 1979, most of them in recent years.

Inward investment has been very good for British business. We have become Europe's biggest net exporter of television sets, computers and microchips. We are now a net exporter of motor cars. Compared with British-owned firms here, inward investors in the UK boast wages a quarter higher, value of product per head a third higher and net capital expenditure per head twice

as high. Because of inward investment and ease of access to the UK market, no less than 40 per cent of UK exports are now generated by foreign-owned firms.

Internationalisation has consequences. It links you closer to others and reduces your capacity to take independent actions that contradict the interests of others. And Britain in the mid-1990s is a very internationally-orientated economy indeed. We are more dependent on foreign trade than any other large industrial economy. We are a larger recipient and generator of investment flows as a share of GDP than any other G7 country. Our economy is exceptionally orientated towards the financial services sector, which now accounts for no less than 17 per cent of the UK's GDP.

Economically, we must continue to make change our ally, technology our friend. But equally, I believe you cannot be the enterprise centre of Europe without being centrally involved in every economic and political debate in Europe.

I believe that our continuing and future economic success, exploiting the opportunities of our enterprise economy, depends to a significant degree on Britain being and staying a key player in the politics of our continent.

People do not invest in Britain, they do not acquire our companies, they do not create new jobs in this country just because they like to play golf or practise their English. They do it because they see Britain as a high-skill, low-tax, flexible, business-friendly entry-point into the big, rich consumer market-place which is Europe today. For them, as it should be for us, the words "Britain" and "Europe" go together. The one leads to the other. Doing well in Britain means doing well in Europe. Good economics and good politics in Europe, as at home, go hand in hand.

As a country we cannot choose to live by the European marketplace economically and then exclude ourselves from discussion of the political future of our continent. That is the path of those who would seek British withdrawal from the EU or a fundamental renegotiation of our membership terms. It is one which we rightly reject.

The decisions being taken in Europe daily are too important for us to stand aside from them. We have a huge vested interest in how Europe's single market

and competition policy operate, what trade policies Europe pursues, what environmental standards it sets. It matters to us deeply what Europe's foreign and security policies are. Inside the EU or outside it, at the heart of Europe or at its edge, we will be affected by the choices made by our partners. We need to be – and we want to be – in there, arguing as a committed member, determined to advance British interests and build a Europe that works.

In arguing for Britain to be and remain a key player in Europe, I believe that we need to become more confident as a people about what we have to offer Europe, what we have to gain from Europe and what our chances are of success in Europe.

Certainly Europe is not, and never will be, the be all and end all of either our economic success or our political power as a country. But, properly structured, it offers a serious opportunity for Britain to continue to punch substantially above its weight in world affairs – a world in which we, and some other European countries too, might otherwise find our influence gradually eroding year by year. In this country we represent only 1 per cent, and falling, of the world's population. Somehow I think we want to continue to enjoy a lot more than 1 per cent of the world's prosperity and power.

The future institutional design of Europe remains open. Malcolm Rifkind said last week, in a striking phrase, that Britain wanted the EU to be more than a free-trade area and less than a federal state. In fact, that is its current shape, and one which we have helped mould, with sovereignty-sharing in some areas and inter-governmental co-operation in others. That must be right. And the encouraging thing is that a good number of our partners share that view.

Finally, I would like to say just a few words about monetary union. I have argued that Britain joined the EU for both political and economic reasons, that Britain is exceptionally well placed to succeed economically in Europe, that capitalising on that advantage means remaining a key player in Europe, politically as well as economically, and that Britain has already exercised a significant effect on the political and economic shape of Europe as it evolves. It follows from all these propositions that the Government's policy on EMU is right. It would be contrary to British interests to rule out now, on any specific timescale, participating in the next important development that may occur in Western Europe: the creation of a single currency. That is our position, and we will stick to it.

This is an edited extract of a lecture delivered by the Chancellor of the Exchequer yesterday at the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

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SONY

For those who were paying attention ...

Quiz time again! Yes, this is our traditional Christmas quiz and this is the traditional time of year when you cut out this special topical Christmas quiz and put it to one side, then spend most of Christmas Day looking for the Christmas Quiz you cut out on December 19th and haven't seen since!

The questions are all based on a knowledge of what happened in 1996, which means for instance that if you have been doing a lot of research into 1929 you'll be at a bit of a disadvantage, so we've put one question in specially for you.

Here we go then with our Grand 1996 Topical Quiz!

1. Who said the following in 1996?
a) "Well, done, Brian – everything seems on course for the next election!"
b) "Yes, John – as chairman of the party I've done everything possible to ensure we get back in power!"
c) "Just a mo, just a mo, Brian – I thought I had told you that the whole point of

the campaign was to make sure we handed the whole mess over to Labour?"
d) "I thought you were joking, John."
e) "I never joke, Brian. Why do you think I've kept Michael Howard in office so long? To court popularity? We're trying to lose the election!"
f) "Well, I'll be doggoned!"
g) "Very possibly, Brian, very possibly. Incidentally, are you a real doctor?"

2. Organisation was so laid-back at the 1996 Olympics in Atlanta, Georgia, that a bus drew up yesterday, December 18th, at the Olympic stadium and disported the French volleyball team six months after they were due to be delivered!
True or false?

3. Ernest Saunders, once thought to be suffering from senile dementia but now not thought to be, had his trial declared unfair by the European Court of Human Rights. On what grounds?
a) The judges are all suffering



Miles Kington

from senile dementia;
b) to give John Major another humiliation;
c) because Guinness now owns over 51 per cent of the shares in the European Court of Human Rights.

4. When the farmers were asked what they thought of the Government's policy on BSE, to which part of which animal did they compare it?

5. Investigators into the TWA crash off the coast of

America now think that the most likely cause was:
a) bad design;
b) bad luck;
c) OJ Simpson.

6. The fire in the Channel tunnel which put it out of action was caused not by a train at all but by a burning lorry, yet it is seen by everyone as a train accident not a road accident. Do you think this was:
a) Fair?
b) Reasonable?
c) Put there secretly by the ferry operators?

7. What was the name of the film that was so violently blasphemous that the European Court of Human Rights refused to give it a clean bill of health?
a) "St Teresa Gorman and her Battle to Get Mock-Tudor Planning Permission"
b) "The Erotic-TV-induced Nightmares of Virginia Bottomley"
c) "Madonna's Baby's First Interview"
d) "Matinée on the Bounty"

8. Explain how the new

Secretary General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, is related to Lord Noel Annan.

9. Under the new voting procedures in Parliament, which the Labour and Lib Dems have forced on the Tory party, David Mellor MP is now paired with:
a) an elderly Tory MP who died several years ago;
b) a small arms firm in Düsseldorf;
c) a large roundabout near Darmstadt.

10. What is Crash?
a) A new book about the next election?
b) The sequel to *Trainspotting*?
c) A controversial film about a French lorry driver?
d) Beryl Bainbridge's new novel about the Wall Street Crash.

More Christmas Quiz questions coming soon! Keep your eyes open for them! And, meanwhile, if a tall dark stranger offers you emergency pairing arrangements – have nothing to do with him!

1996

the commentators

Who needs a euphemism for Christmas?

I have just returned from the United States, where Christmas is in full spate. Except that it isn't Christmas. It's "The Holiday Season". Carols are crooned from every shop entrance and blare from 'lanterns' on street corners. But they aren't quite. Christmas carols. They are redolent of tinkling sleigh bells and jingling cheer, but the message is oddly coy when it comes to religious specifics. Stampedes of red-coated reindeer convey their red-checked Santas through thickets of holly, spangled with giant snowflakes, escorted by squadrons of robins. But you'll find precious few mentions of Jesus or Mary or even shepherds or Wise Men from the East, and certainly no reference to the intricate theology of the Incarnation. When you telephone hotel reception, before the inevitable (and unforgivably maddening) "How may I help you?" you get a seasonal greeting as a bonus. Happy Holidays! Not Happy Christmas or Merry Yuletide but Happy Holidays or, in its full version, "Happy Holiday Season".

The first few times I experienced this mealy-mouthed evasion, I queried it. Putting on my most innocently testy John Cleese voice (I just love your English dialect) I inquired exactly what was this "holiday"? Could it be Labor Day? Veterans' Day? St Patrick's Day (notoriously a tradition as American as apple pie, celebrated with green beer garnished with plastic leprechauns)? Was it the birthday of George Washington, or perhaps another from the pantheon of birthdays that stud the oatmeal calendar? No? Oh, I see, of course, how silly of me, you must mean Happy Christmas. But of course we mustn't call it that, must we, because that would cause offence and "hurt" to the Jews (Muslims, Hindus, Hare Krishnas, etc).

The constitutional separation of church and state has not stopped America becoming the most religious country in the (otherwise) civilised world, and in a number of court cases litigious representatives of non-Christian religions have sued local governments for erecting cribs or nativity tableaux in public places. Presumably, working on the alternative principle of "If you can't beat them, join them", other Jewish groups on both sides of the Atlantic have pressed into service the minor festival of Chanukah, which happens to fall conveniently at the right end of the year (Chanukah or Hanukkah actually commemorates the purification and rededication of the Temple by Judas Maccabeus around 165BC, after its pollution by the Syrians). As long ago as 1902 the Daily Chronicle noted that "The feast of



Richard Dawkins

In their desire to be inoffensive, Americans have set the pace for meaningless holidays

at the child? Of course not; the very idea groans with sinister implications of indoctrination. For this reason, most educated atheists (and, by the way, have you ever met an uneducated atheist?) bend over backwards to let their children join in the religious life of their schools. Pupils who are withdrawn from religious classes or services are not withdrawn by atheist parents. They are withdrawn by parents belonging to rival religions, presumably the same types who sue local councils for celebrating Christmas (and when did an atheist ever do that?).

As for children who are withdrawn by their parents from biology classes where evolution is taught, they are surely victims of an educational form of parental child abuse and are entitled to protection by the state. But will anybody stand up and say so? They will not, because the kind of people who might think it is nice, liberal intellectuals, and nice, liberal intellectuals are scared to jelly of being caught not "respecting" religious conviction. Any other sort of conviction you can examine with a critical eye, and you can use your intellect to take it apart if it is found wanting. But if a conviction turns out to be a religious conviction - Whoa, back off! Religious conviction doesn't have to defend itself. It doesn't have to justify itself. You just have to respect it, period.

Even making fun of its antics at Christmas time is in the grossest bad taste.

Virgin's virgin, right, had a white veil and a sad expression, when all you really need is a parthenogenetically developed ovum and a back-mutation to testosterone sensitivity

It's time somebody came to the defence of the Virgin Mary. I think what made my mind up was the experience of watching her being manhandled across the stage during the Christmas play at my children's school the other day. She was a tiny demure vision in blue (played by Alice, aged five), carrying a doll Jesus with an abstracted air, her waist encircled by the arm of my son Max, who was playing St Joseph (usual £10 to form mistress) as if the divine carpenter were an ageing roadie latent on finding a fashionable wine bar rather than a manger.

But as I looked at Alice/Mary - a traditionally non-speaking, endlessly put-upon role in Nativity plays - it occurred to me that the Mother of God has been getting a terrible press lately. Forget the obvious stuff - how, for instance, her most beautiful nickname has been so totally co-opted by Ms Ciccone. Worse is the way her image is so casually abused by marketing departments.

When Virgin Records decided they needed a special Christmas thrust, they grabbed a (frankly rather experienced-looking) babe in a Virgin T-shirt, put her in a white veil, gave her a sad expression and appended a banner saying "All you need is..."

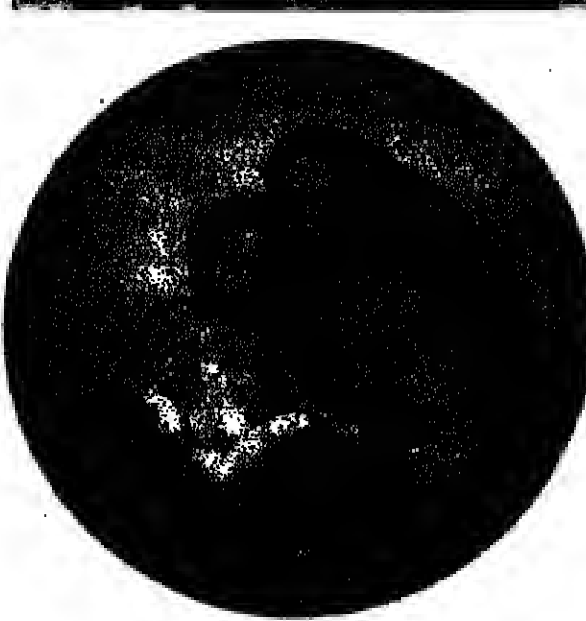
Then the "Churches Advertising Network", whom I take to be some ecumenical convocation of marketing-minded clerics, festooned the hoardings of central London with their "Bad Hair Day" joke ("You're a virgin, you've had a baby, then three kings show up"), the kind of sally that comes from people who have heard of the concept of humour without knowing how one actually goes about it.

One thinks of the uncomplicated affection with which, in more devout days, one used to regard the Queen of Heaven and one cannot but feel rather appalled by this thick-headed, block-headed *lese-majesté*.

Then Science and Christian Belief magazine (I get it for the leaves and fishes receipts) plops through the door. Seeking to answer the evils of some sceptical Christians who doubt that Mary could have stayed a virgin while conceiving Jesus, a credulous genetics buffoon called Sam Berry from University College London tries to explain the genetic circumstances of "virgin conception". It's an uphill struggle.

"The mechanisms I have outlined," says the Prof seriously, "are unlikely, unproven and involve the implication that either Jesus or Mary (or both) were developmentally abnormal."

There follows a hailstorm of chromosomal acronyms. XYs and XXs flying around like typewriter cancellations, and a lot of stuff about genetic mutation.



Prof Berry sees Mary as an androgynous mess, sterile and wombless but with the capacity to develop human eggs. "If this happened and if the ovum developed parthenogenetically," he writes, clutching at straws a little, "and if a back-mutation to testosterone sensitivity took place, we would have the situation of an apparently normal woman giving birth, without intercourse, to a son."

Well done, Sam. I think we all feel a great deal better after that. Myself, I'm happy to leave it a mystery, of the interpersonal rather than the genetic kind. It's ages since I went near a Catholic church, but I'd prefer it if the Virgin Mary were allowed to keep her secrets. Remember Charles Causley's poem "The Ballad of the Broad Man", in which the neighbours speculate rudely about her pregnancy? They wonder about Joseph ("The old man's past it, the neighbours said/That girl's been up to no good") and the angel Gabriel ("And who was that elegant fellow/They said, 'in the shiny gear?'") and look for an answer. They don't get one: "Mary never answered/Mary over replied/She kept the information/like the baby, safe inside." Merry Christmas.

I was sorry to hear that Edward Blisshen had died. The possessor of the most amused voice and most mobile eyebrows in medioland, he was also a plausible candidate for the title of Nicest Man in the World.

Readers of his multiple autobiographies will know the self-deprecating warmth that came off the pages as he described his run-ins with schoolboys, supply teachers, Civil Service types, army personnel and his appalling



Blisshen: Good Egg

father. He was amazingly well-read - although far too appreciative of the printed word ever to make a plausible critic - shyly flattering, a virtuoso Good Egg.

I met him just once some years ago, when I was a guest on *A Good Read*. My co-guest was Maeve Binchy, the Irish novelist, at whom Blisshen twinkled with merciless charm for half an hour. He praised her taste, her choice of books, her insights, her Irishness... Finally, as she rose to leave, she extracted from her pocket a curious metal object which she shook out in front of her.

She was a tiny demure vision in blue, carrying a doll Jesus with an abstracted air, her waist encircled by the arm of my son Max

john walsh

From a series of zigzag angles, it resolved itself into a walking stick. "Oh Maeve, how splendid," breathed an entranced Blisshen, "a telescopic shillelagh."

Like right-thinking people everywhere, I have no truck with terrorists. I abhor the use of violence to further political ends. I cannot condone the deployment of force in the service of a higher good. The rhetoric of the so-called freedom fighter cuts no ice with me.

And I have no clue about the precise nature of the demands being made by the Tupac Amaru, the Peruvian organisation that interrupted the ambassador's reception in Lima on Tuesday night with a burst of gunfire, having infiltrated the party by dressing as waiters. But I cannot help feeling a small instinctive empathy about their invasion of the diplomatic circuit. I mean, somebody had to do something about that horrible bald butler. Someone had to upset that idiotic pyramid of gold-wrapped chocolates. And somebody - anybody - would be surely justified in visiting an awful revenge on the blonde who gushes to the ambassador, "Why, wiz zeez Rocher chocolates, you are spoiling us..."

I rushed to see *Evita* at a preview on Sunday morning, where, at a time when the rest of the civilised world is digesting Cumberland sausages, one sat enduring Jimmy Nail's crooning technique, and scrutinising Madonna's abdomen for signs of gestation. But the film is very absorbing: Madonna sings "Another Suicide in Another Hall" with an unexpected sob in the lower register (is it pregnancy or has she been taking lessons?), and Antonio Banderas is amazingly charming as Che Guevara.



It's all conducted at a high old Wagnerian pitch as we come to expect from the great Alan Parker, who has a Hitchcockian cameo as a film director exasperated by *Evita*'s ineptness. What puzzles me is the "screenplay by..." credit. It goes to Parker and Oliver Stone. Now I can see how the film expands the stage version in various ways, with little *coups de théâtre* like the opening sequence in a cinema - but it remains a *sung-through* musical. That means, there's no dialogue. There's Tim Rice's lyrics and *réclat*, and that's your lot.

Intrigued, you sit there waiting for some stunning interpolations of Oliver Stone chat, as per usual in a screenplay - and after two hours, all you can remember is a single conversation outside a church, where *Evita*'s mum is barred from the funeral of her child-dread's father. The dead man's widow abuses her and gesticulates. Does this mean Oliver Stone's only creative contribution to this movie is this?

Widow-woman: "You were his whore and your children are bastards." (Spits. Bites thumb.)

Is that it? He could have done it over the telephone.



Replacements for Jesus: graduates of a school for Santas in California

The Lords shoot themselves in the foot

Once again Tory peers are starting to make trouble for Michael Howard. Hurray, perhaps you think. Haven't the Lords repeatedly softened some of the sharper and most illiberal edges of Howard's law and order reforms? Not this time. Last Monday's second reading debate on the Firearms (Amendment) Bill, introduced in the aftermath of Dunblane, exposed the backwoods strength of the hereditary peerage in all its naked splendour. The Earl of Strathmore withdrew his hostile amendment on the Bill - but only on the clear understanding that he and his colleagues will press for detailed changes to it in the new year. Those doubting that House of Lords reform is worth the fuss could do worse than have a look at Monday's *Hansard*.

There were 31 speakers in all. Of these, eight, including the Home Office minister Baroness Blatch and the two opposition frontbench spokesmen Lord McIntosh and Lord Rodgers (all three are life peers) spoke either in favour of the Bill or of an even tougher ban. Five were equivocal, and 18 were outright critics of the Bill, almost entirely on the grounds that it tampered with the legitimate rights of recreational shooters. Of those 18, one was Labour, the Euro-sceptic scourge of his own front bench, Lord Stoddart; one, Lord Thurso, was the only Liberal Democrat to attack the basis of the Bill; and two, Lord Craig of Radley and the former Law Lord, Lord Ackner, were crossbenchers. The other 14 were all Conservatives. And of these, all but



Donald Macintyre

In their debate on gun control, hereditary peers inadvertently provided lethal ammunition for their own abolition

one, the landowner and former journalist Lord Marlesford, were hereditary peers. (Of these, nine - like Lord Marlesford - went to Eton.)

The Government's legislation went further than Lord Cullen's report, in proposing a total ban on all handguns of over .22 calibre - though not as far as Labour and the Liberal Democrats wanted. It is perfectly legitimate for peers to question whether it would have been better for the Government to stick to Lord Cullen's recommendations. It is equally reasonable to argue that laws passed on a wave of emotion aren't always the best laws.

But faith in the Lords as a cool-headed revising chamber is scarcely reinforced by a reading of the arguments deployed in Monday's debate. Here, for example, is the Earl of Shrewsbury, Tory chairman, no less, of the Firearms Consultative Committee, the independent body set up in 1988 to advise the Home Secretary of the day on firearms legislation: "It is a very great pity that both [Thomas] Hamilton and [Michael] Ryan [the Hungerford killer] committed the atrocities with legally-held weapons. The problem does not lie with those who legally hold weapons. The problem lies with the millions of illegally-held weapons..." The logic of this argument is genuinely baffling. What exactly is "the problem" that the noble Earl is talking about here? What about "the problem" of the massacres perpetrated by Ryan and Hamilton? Nobody knows for sure that they wouldn't have carried out some dreadful crime if they hadn't

been able to get weapons legally. But no one knows for sure that they would, either.

Here, too, is the Earl of Haddington, gun-club member. Like many of the speakers he talks touchingly of his "appalling shock" as the father of three small children at the horror of Dunblane. But he goes on to describe affectionately how his father's gamekeeper "stressed the aspects of safety in no uncertain manner" when he taught him to shoot as a boy and then proceeds to question the planned ban on the use of dum-dum bullets for .22 handguns on the grounds that rabbits will suffer "agony" when they are shot with inferior ammunition. Lord Balfour, who also rails against this "emotive, panic Bill", shares with their Lordships his youthful apprenticeship with the "estate gamekeeper" - as if the main danger from handguns was carelessness by poor peasants who aren't properly taught to use them - and quotes approvingly the estimate by Brian Carter of the Gun Trade Association that a "reasonable compensation pay-out" would be £18a rather than the £150m currently on offer from the Government. Lord Gisborough describes the Bill as a "waste of public money" and holds the mass media, rather than lethal weapons, to blame for the current "harvest of gratuitous violence, road rage and sexual deviation". And Lord Swansea, with all the deep aristocratic disdain for a popular cause that he can muster, says that the Government has been panicked into introducing this "terrible Bill" by "pressure from

the public and the uninformed popular press but also [horror of horrors] by the imminence of a general election."

It was left (mainly) to life peers of all three main parties to point out that the Association of Chief Police Officers approved the ban, and that while it might not prevent every similar tragedy in the future it was worth doing for its own sake. And it was the Tory life peer Lord Sanderson of Bowden, a Kirk elder, who affectingly quoted a senior churchwoman saying the ban accorded with the Church of Scotland's commitment to "promoting a culture of peace rather than of violence in our country". It is just that point which most of the landed hereditary peers don't get.

Ministers are apprehensive. The Lords could seriously delay the Bill in the new year, and that would only strengthen Labour's case for depriving hereditary peers of the vote. It's true that the Straffords and the Shrewsburies are only saying aloud what a lot of Tory Commons hack-benchers think - that there should be no ban. Quite senior Tories are oow saying privately that Mr Howard has severely damaged his leadership chances as a candidate from the right by introducing what one ex-minister this week called "profoundly un-Tory legislation" on handguns. But the MPs are much more reluctant to say so openly in the run-up to an election. The blue bloods have no such scruples. Wasn't it Bagehot who said that the "cure for admiring the House of Lords was to go and look at it?"

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COMMENT

A quick back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests that BZW and Schroders have put their clients at risk with these purchases to the tune of about £2m. This is surely devotion beyond the call of duty. But then again, perhaps not.

Northern share purchase an unusual move

We are not down to the last of the Monicans quite yet, but with just two surviving braves from an original tribe of 12 regional electricity companies, we're not far off. The agreed bid by Entergy of the US for London Electricity will leave just Yorkshire and Southern as independent quoted stock market companies, assuming that Northern's fight for continued independence falls. Notwithstanding a spirited defence from Northern, supported by some loyal followers, it's still hard to see how our friends from the North can survive.

Extinction, then. Does this matter? Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, plainly takes the view that it does not, for the moment he sanctioned the first US bid for a regional electricity company, it was obvious what was going to happen. One after the other, they would all be taken over. It is always possible Mr Lang didn't anticipate quite how far the process would go, but he's a fool if he didn't. Utilities the world over are predictable lemming-like creatures. The moment anyone does anything remotely new, the others just have to follow.

Whatever the case, there's not much Mr Lang can do about it now. It ought to be pointed out, however, that what's happened, though perfectly consistent with the principles of free markets, is not what the Government originally intended. One of the policy objectives of electricity privatisation was to create 12 independently quoted companies, and expand direct share own-

ership within the electorate in the process. There is no reason to believe that American stewardship of our electricity industry will be any worse than the regime now passing into history, but it isn't what the Government wanted when these companies were floated on the stock market.

C'est la vie. Meanwhile back to Northern and its plucky and somewhat adventurous defence against CE Electric of the US. It's advisers, BZW and Schroders, snapped up 2.3 per cent of the stock yesterday paying just a whisker under the bidder's price for the shares. This is a highly unusual thing in a takeover bid, for the potential downside for the shares should the bid fail is quite substantial. Were these firms buying as principal, or on behalf of investment clients? If the latter it is a pretty bizarre thing to have done. A quick back-of-the-envelope calculation suggests BZW and Schroders could incur losses of £2m on these purchases should the bid fail. This is surely devotion beyond the call of duty. But then again, perhaps not.

In the old days of the City - pre-Guinness - these purchases would simply have been deemed and nobody would have been any the wiser. But that kind of thing doesn't happen any longer. Not that Schroders and BZW have to, anyway.

Their success fee, should the bid fail, will probably cover the loss. And there would also be all those additional fees to come from fighting the next bid to land on Northern's door step. What Schroders and BZW are

doing is well within the rules, but if they were acting as principal here, they plainly have a commercial interest that goes well beyond that of ordinary Northern shareholders. And if it were investment clients? It is hard to see what interest they would have in buying at these levels. Either way, the advisers have some explaining to do.

Wage inflation fails to catch up

Any remaining doubts about the state of the labour market are removed by the fall in unemployment announced yesterday - it's going like a train however much the Government's usual jiggery-pokery with the definition has exaggerated the decline. Yet even more remarkable than seeing headline unemployment below 2 million just in time for Christmas is the fact that underlying earnings growth has remained so low.

Wage inflation has edged up - there is no other way to describe it - from 3.25 per cent to 4 per cent during the past year. During the same period the number of people claiming unemployment benefit has dropped by more than 300,000, taking the headline jobless rate to its lowest since early 1991. What has happened to the traditional British surge in pay claims when the jobs market gets a little bit livelier than moribund?

More economists are starting to argue that labour market deregulation has at last

achieved at least a mini-miracle for the British economy. The rate of unemployment below which further declines trigger inflation has possibly or probably fallen, allowing the economy to grow a bit faster before running into the inflationary buffers. That rate - the "non-accelerating inflation rate of unemployment" or "nairu" to economists - might be closer to 6 per cent rather than 7 to 8 per cent.

But that does not mean the Chancellor can cheerfully watch the economy build up steam without resorting to another interest rate increase to moderate the pressure. If unemployment were to continue falling at the same speed as last month, wage inflation would start climbing in no time. That process has already started in the service industries, which have been expanding at a racy pace.

Nonetheless, there has plainly been a significant shift in the relationship between the state of the labour market and wage inflation, and for that the Government can take some credit.

Brussels takes a flier on Boeing

If we Britons are occasionally tempted to feel threatened by the ebbs and flows of sovereignty to Brussels, then how on earth must the Americans feel about it? The question is worth asking in light of a bizarre warning from the European Competition Commis-

sioner, Karel van Miert, yesterday that he is going to take a long hard look at the Boeing takeover of McDonnell Douglas.

The astute will have noticed that neither of these companies is European, nor do they have operations of any significance in Europe. Indeed it would be hard to get much further away than the West Coast of the United States. They may also observe that the takeover will do very little to increase Boeing's market dominance, since McDonnell Douglas, a shadow of its former self, nowadays only accounts for 5 per cent of world airliner deliveries, most of which are in its own backyard.

The observant may furthermore have noticed that Airbus, Europe's home-grown answer to Boeing, has publicly asserted that the merger is a non-event which will have no effect on its position. Indeed, those people who know a thing or two about running airlines think it will actually bolster Airbus by reminding everyone that it is now the only alternative. None of this seems to bother Mr van Miert who pronounces that the merger is "problematic", the inference being that he will have no hesitation in stamping on it if he does not like the cut of Boeing's cloth.

This is good old-fashioned trade imperialism - albeit of a kind that the Americans themselves have happily engaged in for 70 years or more. If Mr van Miert really thinks he is acting in the interests of European consumers, then he should think again.

£1.3bn London Electricity bid agreed

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

London Electricity became the latest privatised regional electricity business to go under the hammer yesterday when Entergy, the New Orleans-based utility that has circled the company for several weeks, announced an agreed £1.3bn takeover bid.

The announcement came as Ian Lang, President of the Board of Trade, gave the go-ahead to the £1.3bn agreed bid for East Midlands Electricity by Dominion Resources, the Virginia power group. The Government's decision not to refer the Dominion offer to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission was widely expected, following last Friday's approval of the £782m takeover offer by US generator CalEnergy for Northern Electric.

The bid for London means leaves two of the 12 privatised electricity companies, Yorkshire Electricity and Southern Electric, not facing takeover offers. Most analysts expect them to lose their independence before a spring general election.

Last night another US utility, the Texas company Houston Industries, was thought to be considering mounting a bid. Houston has been widely tipped to buy a REC, and last year mounted an unsuccessful joint attack for Norweb, ultimately bought by North West Water.

Entergy is offering to pay 705p in cash for London shares, which it said was 27 per cent higher than London's share price of 566.5p on 23 October, the day before the most recent wave of bid speculation in the industry began. London shares ended the day up 13p at 696.5p.

Shareholders would also receive the interim dividend payment of 14.3p announced with London's half-yearly results last week and due to be paid out on 31 January.

Ed Lupberger, Entergy chairman, reflected the political sensitivity of a US takeover bid for the British capital's power supplier. He pledged to maintain investment and service quality for its 2 million customers.

Entergy provides electricity to 2.4 million customers in Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas. It had sales last year of \$6.3bn (£1.7bn) and made profits of \$520m. It already owns the company that supplies power to central Melbourne in Australia and has operations in South America and Pakistan.

However, the takeover puts a question mark on London's existing collaboration with Thames Water. Proposals currently under discussion include combining billing systems, procurement and some repair work of the two utilities to cut costs. Entergy said it had not yet spoken to Thames but was expecting to make a "courtesy call".

Terry Ogilvie, head of En-

tergy's power division which will run London, said all of London's non-regulated operations would be under review. "We think those kind of ventures are an appropriate thing for London to pursue, but we just don't know much about them at this stage."

Sir Bob Reid, chairman of London, insisted the deal did not mean a further round of job cuts on top of the 3,000 reduction in London's workforce since privatisation. He said: "This is not going to have any jarring effect on London's employees. They're used to trimming and focusing."

The takeover will also bring a cash bonanza for London directors who stand to make more than £965,350 from share options, on which the dividend will also be paid.

Mike Kersey, who moved to London as chief executive last year, will pocket £95,573, while Alan Towers, finance director, will net £783,755, plus £75,625 from the sale of shares in the company.

The biggest winner is Roger Urwin, former chief executive who left London to manage the National Grid's electricity transmission business last year.

He stands to gain £835,423 from share options, plus a further £665,653 from his shares. Mr Urwin ran into a political storm in 1995 when he made paper profits of £834,000 on previous options.



Bright sparks: Ed Lupberger, chairman and chief executive of Entergy (left) with Sir Bob Reid, chairman of London Electricity. Mr Lupberger pledged to maintain quality for London Electricity's 2 million customers. Photograph: FT

Northern's advisers buy shares

Northern Electric ran into a furious row with hostile bidder CalEnergy last night as the Newcastle-based group managed to add another surprise plank to its defence campaign, writes Chris Godsmark.

With tomorrow's closing date for the bid fast approaching, Schroders, Northern's advisers, and BZW, the company's brokers, disclosed that they had bought shares in Northern and immediately pledged to reject the US offer.

The 1.5 per cent stake bought by BZW, along with the 0.8 per cent acquired by Schroders, means investors holding 17.34 per cent of the company have so far backed the existing management. Both BZW and Schroders paid 645p for the shares, well above the market price. Northern's share price dropped by 5.5p to 630p, which is 20p below CalEnergy's increased 650p bid price.

CalEnergy is thought to have complained furiously to the

Takeover Panel, though advisers to the US predator admitted the tactic did not appear to break bid rules. But a spokesman said: "We believe that this action is clearly designed to frustrate the bid and have taken the appropriate action."

Though Northern is not believed to have been warned about the share purchases beforehand, the company was clearly delighted at the move.

A similar situation occurred during nursing home operator

Goldborough's defence against a hostile takeover bid by rival Westminster Healthcare over the summer. In the last few hours SBC Warburg, Goldborough's advisers, bought a 4 per cent stake in the target.

Three big City investors have already backed the Northern board: the Prudential, Northern's biggest shareholder with 11.35 per cent. Foreign & Colonial with 1.5 per cent and another institution believed to be M&G with just over 2 per cent.

Wessex plans buybacks

Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

Wessex Water yesterday revealed a plan to spend £240m on share buybacks combined with a move to buy out most of the stake held by its biggest outside investor.

The latest water industry buyback, which effectively means Wessex is buying up 25 per cent of its share capital, will see the 19.5 per cent stake held by Waste Management International (WMI), a US waste company, reduced to just 3.3 per cent.

Nicholas Hood, Wessex chairman, said £157m would be spent on buying up 43.5 million non-voting "B" and "C" shares, all of which were issued to WMI after privatisation, along with a small number of the US group's ordinary shares.

A further £79.5m will go on buying back 10 per cent of the ordinary shares held by other investors. The deal needs to be approved by shareholders at an extraordinary general meeting in the new year.

Wessex was left with surplus cash after the Government recently blocked its attempt to buy neighbouring South West Water. The rival bidder, Severn Trent, this week also announced it had spent £122m buying back 5 per cent of its shares. The buyback will raise Wessex's gearing to around 40 per cent.

Mr Hood said the joint venture waste management company between Wessex and WMI would continue as before, though the buyback did not preclude further acquisitions. He explained: "There's a lot of speculation, but all I can say is we are reserving our firepower."

Wessex shares slipped 0.5p to 365.5p.

First Choice cuts dividend by a quarter

Tom Stevenson
City Editor

First Choice, Britain's third-largest tour operator behind Thomson and Airtours, completed a turbulent year yesterday by cutting its dividend by more than a quarter. Despite the fall, the company's depressed shares closed 4.5p higher at 63p as the City banked on new chief executive Peter Long reversing its recent fortunes.

Mr Long was catapulted into his new job just a month after joining First Choice earlier this year when a boardroom coup unseated his predecessor Francis Baron. Yesterday he spelled out a strategy for returning First Choice to a level of profitability that would compare with the rest of the holiday industry.

Profits in the year to October of £10m showed a marked improvement on the £1.3m achieved in 1995, when the whole industry was hit by overcapacity and slumping prices. Mr Long said, however, that those profits represented an unacceptable return on sales, which topped £1bn for the first time.

Commenting on the decision to reduce the full-year dividend from 3.85p to 2.8p, executive deputy chairman Ian Clubb said the move was a step towards achieving a "more

appropriate level of dividend cover this year". Earnings per share were 2.1p, failing to match the dividend payout.

Mr Long said current trading was strong, with early bookings for next summer 42 per cent higher than last year, compared with an industry average increase of 31 per cent. By the end of March, the company hopes to have sold 60 per cent of its holidays, a performance that would minimise the risk of a repeat of the summer of 1995 when unsold holidays had to be sold at bargain basement prices.

Analysts welcomed Mr Long's focus on managing capacity and reducing costs. He has a strong reputation within the industry, which has been a graveyard for all but the most experienced specialist operators.

The UK tour operation performed much better than in the previous year but remained in the red with a £200,000 loss compared with an £1.1m shortfall. Skibound, a new winter sports arm, chipped in £3.1m. The worst performance was Canada, where First Choice's Signature subsidiary slumped from a profit of £7.9m to £4.7m. Despite the fall, Mr Clubb said there was no intention of selling the business to Airtours, which has expressed an interest. Investment column, page 20

Gulf Canada approaches Clyde

The oil exploration sector was set alight yesterday by a sighting shot for Clyde Petroleum from Gulf Canada Resources, a former subsidiary of the Reichmann property empire, writes Tom Stevenson. Clyde's shares closed 34p higher at 118.5p as dealers banked on Gulf's initial 105p-a-share approach being nothing more than an opening gambit in a hotly contested bid.

Gulf's Texan president and chief executive, James Bryan, known in the oil business as JP, called Clyde's chairman, Malcolm Gourlay, just before 7am yesterday to warn him of the imminent hostile approach. By 11am, Clyde had issued a statement rejecting Gulf's offer as "unsolicited and wholly unacceptable".

Mr Bryan described the timing of the approach as unfortunate, saying he said the City was beginning to rerate Clyde's shares. As a second liner with a bias towards oil production rather than exploration, Clyde has traded at a discount to its peer group.

He rejected Gulf's claim that the exercise and sale of options by Clyde directors this week at 81p undermined their argument that the bid undervalued the company. The numbers of shares involved, he said, were insignificant compared to the holdings directors had retained.

Mr Bryan described Clyde's record in exploration as "miserable", but said he had great respect for what Roy Franklin, Clyde's managing director, had

done in creating a four-pronged business with operations in Australia and Indonesia as well as the Dutch and British sectors of the North Sea. The deal, Mr Bryan said, fitted in with Gulf's ambition of expanding its geographical spread beyond its North American and Indonesian interests.

He said the £432m offer was a full price, which represented a 35 per cent premium to Clyde's value on 27 November and a 24 per cent premium to the price at which the shares closed on Tuesday night. He compared the price with the 62p value Clyde's broker Hoare Govett had put on the company's net assets and the 84p "going concern" value, which includes probable and possible oil

and gas reserves as well as the stricter proven variety.

The deal sparked a flurry of speculative interest in other smaller oil companies. Cairn Energy, Hardy Oil and Gas and Monument all saw their shares rise sharply yesterday, as did the larger players, Enterprise and Lasmo.

Clyde said it planned to set out the reasons for its rejection of Gulf's offer in a letter to shareholders. In the meantime, it said, shareholders should do nothing. Clyde said the terms "fail to take account of the record and prospects of Clyde and the quality of its business and portfolio".

Gulf's shares were off £0.25 to £9.30 in early trading in Toronto.

Woolwich vows to fight Bill

Jill Treanor
Banking Correspondent

The Woolwich Building Society pledged yesterday to fight for amendments to a controversial new building societies bill, which Angela Knight, the Treasury minister, said she hoped to introduce to the Commons before late January and early March.

Cross-party support seemed likely after Mike O'Brien, Mrs Knight's counterpart in the Labour Party, welcomed the publication of the Bill, though he said Labour would still like

an additional rule to exclude members of less than two years' standing from benefiting from conversion to banks.

The Woolwich and the Alliance & Leicester, which plan to convert to banks, have failed to persuade Mrs Knight to reinstate their full five-year protection against takeovers, which they will lose under the Bill if they make a bid for another financial institution.

The publication of the Bill left lingering doubts about the timing of the floatations of the two societies, although a third, Northern Rock, said it would

proceed as planned. The Woolwich said: "We will lobby to ensure that it is suitably amended on its way through Parliament. Had our board known when it took the decision to convert that this was even a possibility, then we might have chosen to convert in a different way."

The Alliance & Leicester said: "The new draft Bill addresses some of the anomalies but does not, in our opinion, complete the process, and leaves converting societies with a number of issues of concern in the middle of long and costly conversion processes."

Mrs Knight made one concession to the converting societies by requiring a 75 per cent turnout in any vote on removing the five-year ban on takeovers. This increases the obstacles to a hostile bid. The Bill eliminates the need to set aside special reserves on flotation.

Without the Bill, some of the converting societies would need to raise extra capital. Brian Davis, chairman of the Building Societies Association and chief executive of the Nationwide Building Society, urged the politicians to get on with the task of getting the Bill passed.

IN BRIEF

• A temporary thaw in the bitter dispute between Time Warner and Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation was in prospect last night as the two companies confirmed a short-term agreement on the carriage of Mr Murdoch's Fox channel on its cable network. The 45-day deal, renewable for further periods of 45 days, will allow Time Warner customers to view the Super Bowl, the US football championship, which is exclusively broadcast by Fox. But the two sides remain in dispute over Time Warner's refusal to carry Mr Murdoch's 24-hour Fox News in New York City. The disagreement has led to the postponement of the launch of the Warner Channel in the UK, which had been scheduled to appear on Murdoch's BSkyB satellite network on 1 November. The legal wrangling between the companies was set to continue.

• De Beers Consolidated Mines said sales of rough diamonds by the De Beers Central Selling Organisation (CSO) in 1996 were \$4.834bn (£2.9bn), 7 per cent higher than the previous year. Sales in the second half of the year were \$2.066bn, 5 per cent higher than during the same period in 1995.

• British Telecommunications will increase the retail prices for calls to services operated by One2One and Orange personal communications networks from 19 February. The new prices reflect increased payments which BT has to make to One2One and Orange. BT said calls would be charged at 30p a minute between 8am and 6pm Monday to Friday; 20p a minute during weekday evenings and overnight; and 10p a minute at weekends. This compares with the current rate of 16.71p a minute during the day and 9.85p a minute at all other times.

• The Department of Trade and Industry said it accepted undertakings from Service Corporation International to "remedy the adverse effects on competition identified by the Monopolies and Mergers Commission" as a result of the acquisition by SCI of Plantbrook Group. The MMC recommended that SCI should be required to divest individual funeral directors' businesses in 10 localities and also to acquire any further funeral directing businesses in these localities without prior government approval. The MMC also recommended that undertakings should be sought in relation to disclosure by SCI of its ownership of funeral businesses.

• The European Commission opened an inquiry into the state aid for Thomson SA and Thomson Multimedia, which was notified to the commission in October ahead of proposals for Thomson SA's privatisation. The measures concern a capital injection of about Fr11bn (£1.3bn) into the parent company Thomson SA and the possibly excessively high price paid by the French state to Thomson SA for its shares in Credit Lyonnais. The commission said this overestimation could represent an "element of aid".

Weightless economy produces a new breed of superstar

When Alan Greenspan, chairman of the Federal Reserve, speaks, anybody with any sense listens carefully - not simply because his remarks will shift the markets, but because he is one of the most perceptive economic commentators around. In one of his less heavily reported speeches last summer, Mr Greenspan noted that the economy weighs about the same now as it did a century ago, even though GDP has grown 20-fold.

On the face of it this is a very odd remark to make about economic growth, but weightlessness, rather than any of the fashionable notions such as globalisation or trade, is the key to understanding the profound changes sweeping over the industrial countries. People think of things of economic value as having physical presence, mass and weight. This is less and less true. The economy is dematerialising.

A quarter of a century ago, the industries that used to create the most value added were - a telling description - the "heavy industries" and the rest of manufacturing: steel, ships, machine tools, cars and washing machines. New electronics, miniaturisation and new materials steadily allowed the same amount of value to be embedded in less weight. For example, cars are smaller, use less steel and are becoming increasingly sophisticated with power steering, stereos and on-board navigational computers. The value added has climbed, the weight has fallen.

There are many examples of physical goods becoming lighter. But more important is the switch in the industrial economies away from manufacturing and towards services. Although we all still want to own cars, and shop for food and clothes, and always will, the share of our income spent on services has risen sharply.

The category "services" jumps between two kinds of activity. There are the "commu-



Diane Coyle

"There has been a switch away from manufacturing and towards services. Although we all still want to own cars, and shop for food and clothes, the share of our income spent on services has risen sharply"

nity and personal" services, such as haircuts, cleaning, babysitting, teaching, nursing, and indeed almost all of the public sector. Then there are what could be described as hi-tech services, including software development and gene research, but also financial derivatives and currency trading, making programmes for satellite TV or pop videos. They depend on modern information technology and telecommunications, and have much higher value added than the traditional services.

These industries are growing like Topsy thanks to a regularity known as Moore's Law, after Gordon Moore, Intel chairman. It is that the computing power of a microchip doubles approximately every 18 months. This rate of technical advance has brought prices down incredibly rapidly. Recent figures published in the *Computer Industry Almanac*, the annual Bible of the industry, showed that the US has two computers for every five people, up from one for every 10,000 people 30 years ago, and predicted that it would be one computer for every two people by the end of the century. The trend has advanced furthest across the Atlantic: world-wide computer density is only about a tenth of the US level. However, there is no definitive empirical evidence on the extent to which any individual economies have become weightless, although this is something that both the Federal Reserve and Bank of England are keen to gather more data on.

every few years by the Bank for International Settlements. The latest, published during the summer, showed that in 1995 more than \$1,000bn worth of currencies was traded daily. London was the main centre, with New York and Tokyo a distant second and third.

The first thing to note is that the BIS, the world's foremost banking authority, can only get this information by sending a questionnaire to the banks concerned, asking for their estimates of the size of their business. Second, the banks filling out the forms assign the trades to one place rather than another according to where their traders have a desk and book their profits or losses. But the dealing is transacted between computers located around the world, and the assignment of trades to London rather than New York is notional. It is not really London that is the biggest centre for foreign exchange trading, but cyberspace.

A second key implication, according to Professor Quah, is that dematerialisation will bring greater inequality. It reinforces the "winner-takes-all" trends in modern economies. A classic paper by US economist Sherwin Rosen, published in 1981, identified the "superstar" phenomenon. Some individuals in fields such as movies can attract incomes far in excess of the average when their extra output has almost no extra cost (a Hollywood actor only has to act once and requires no more effort to be seen by another viewer) and wherever reputation will increase demand for that individual rather than another. Trivial differences in talent are magnified into big inequalities in earnings.

The phenomenon is spreading across the weightless industries - not just the field of entertainment but also areas such as medicine, where technology allows stars to spread their expertise over a wider market through operations via video links, for instance.

Computers in use per 1,000 people

Year	US	World
1980	10.0	0.0
1985	20.0	0.5
1990	40.0	1.5
1995	80.0	2.5
1996	90.0	3.0
1997	100.0	3.5
1998	110.0	4.0
1999	120.0	4.5
2000	130.0	5.0
2001	140.0	5.5
2002	150.0	6.0
2003	160.0	6.5
2004	170.0	7.0
2005	180.0	7.5
2006	190.0	8.0
2007	200.0	8.5
2008	210.0	9.0
2009	220.0	9.5
2010	230.0	10.0

Source: Computer Industry Almanac, 1996

Professor Quah does not think this kind of inequality is undesirable because it is becoming easier for people to become stars - all it really takes is an idea.

There is no need for huge capital investment to break into dematerialised industries. He thinks that, just as people do not condemn lottery winners because everybody has a chance at winning millions for only £1, the opportunities for mobility will compensate for the increase in inequality.

This might be over-optimistic, for the increase in inequality in the UK and US during the past decade has been controversial. Whether governments can do anything about it is a different matter. What politicians will be able to do in the weightless economy is going to be very different from the policy levers they can pull now, if a growing share of economic activity takes place only beyond regional or national boundaries but also beyond measurement.

Alliance finds a plum present for Ms Knight

PEOPLE & BUSINESS



Peter White: Catering for ministerial tastes

Is Peter White, head of Alliance & Leicester Building Society trying to butter up Angela Knight, the Treasury Minister? And could this have anything to do with her Building Society bill which he claims could jeopardise the Alliance float? The answer is yes, if a little Christmas gift is anything to go by.

Ms Knight was looking more than pleased yesterday when she received a Moomins Christmas pudding from the persuasive Mr White. Attached to the offering was a little note: "Dear Angela, sorry you couldn't come to our Christmas party last week. Peter." Ms Knight says the freebie pud will adorn the family dinner table on Christmas Day lunchtime.

JP Bryan, the flamboyant Texan who runs Gulf Canada Resources, is bringing a dash of US colour to the stuffy British oil sector. "JP", as he is called, learned his trade in Texas and speaks with the "lubbacoo in cheek" style drawn straight out of Hollywood movies. For discussions on Gulf's hostile bid at Clyde Petroleum he wore golden bullet cuff links and a tie emblazoned with big pink pigs.

"Well, it's pigs to the slaughter," he said, referring rather unkindly to Clyde. Another Texanism was: "We're buying the steak, not the sizzle." Whatever can he mean?

Are tactics getting dirty on day one of the Gulf Canada-Clyde Petroleum bid? The Gulf team were yesterday saying that their man "JP" had tried in vain to telephone the Clyde boss to inform them that he was gunning for their company. He was unsuccessful, Gulf's advisers said, because the Clyde clan was out enjoying a spot of shooting.

This echoed the plight of Sir Rocco Forte a year ago, who was indulging in similar sport in Yorkshire when the Granada bid blew up. The initial story went that it was Clyde chairman Malcolm Gourlay who was out on the moors

and had been forced to scurry back to London to get all his ducks in a row.

Mr Gourlay hotly denied this, saying he could not be contacted at 7am because he was on his way back to London from his Hertfordshire home. "And anyway, I don't shoot."

Later thoughts turned to Clyde managing director Roy Franklin - that it was he who was shooting when his company was being shot at. No denial was forthcoming.

London's Father Christmas must be working overtime this year if trade at the Stafford Hotel in London is anything to go by. Executive director Terry Holmes has been running Santa's Sanctuaries all week where Santas benefit from a Happy Hour between 5.30-6.30pm.

But it seems that even the prospect of a half-price sharpener after hard hours in the grotto is not enough to entice them in. So far only around 20 Santas have been turning up. The hard core consists of professionals so dedicated to their craft that developing a red nose for the day job is seen as method acting.

London Electricity chairman Sir Bob Reid was left cursing his luck at the weekend when he first heard talk that Sir Bob, who was in Scotland,

rushed to Aberdeen airport only to see his British Airways flight grounded due to mechanical problems. He then turned to his mobile phone but decided it was too risky. Instead he was reduced to pushing a pocketful of small change into an airport call box in order to continue his high level discussions.

It seems Sir Bob was not in possession of a phonecard and the thought of using his credit card did not occur.

Mike Edelson, the chief executive of Conrad, which is merging with Sheffield United, will be standing down as a director of the more illustrious Manchester United. Though this is required under league regulation - it is not allowed to be a director of more than one club - he hopes to maintain an Old Trafford link. He is rather hoping Sheffield United draw the Reds in the opening game of the Premier ship next season.

Given that the Blades are currently "resting" in the Nationwide Division One, some promotion or relegation will have to happen to enable this fixture. Is he so confident that the Sheffield club will win promotion? Or does he know something about Manchester United we don't?

Nigel Cope

Foreign Exchange Rates as at 17/12/96

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
US	1.5729	8.8	33.30	1000	1000
Canada	0.6544	5.4	18.50	1000	1000
France	6.5493	68.61	203.85	154.64	30.28
Germany	1.3663	6.81	20.85	1000	1000
Italy	1.3663	6.81	20.85	1000	1000
Japan	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
UK	1.5729	8.8	33.30	1000	1000
Spain	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Belgium	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Netherlands	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Denmark	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Norway	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Sweden	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Australia	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
New Zealand	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
South Africa	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
India	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Singapore	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47

Other Spot Rates

Country	Spot	1 month	3 months	6 months	1 year
Australia	1.5729	8.8	33.30	1000	1000
Canada	0.6544	5.4	18.50	1000	1000
France	6.5493	68.61	203.85	154.64	30.28
Germany	1.3663	6.81	20.85	1000	1000
Italy	1.3663	6.81	20.85	1000	1000
Japan	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
UK	1.5729	8.8	33.30	1000	1000
Spain	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Belgium	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Netherlands	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Denmark	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Norway	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Sweden	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Australia	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
New Zealand	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
South Africa	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
India	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47
Singapore	160.32	95.91	281.26	137.77	45.47

Interest Rates

Country	Rate	Term
UK	6.00%	Base
France	5.75%	Base
Germany	5.50%	Base
Italy	5.75%	Base
Japan	5.75%	Base
Spain	5.75%	Base
Belgium	5.75%	Base
Netherlands	5.75%	Base
Denmark	5.75%	Base
Norway	5.75%	Base
Sweden	5.75%	Base
Australia	5.75%	Base
New Zealand	5.75%	Base
South Africa	5.75%	Base
India	5.75%	Base
Singapore	5.75%	Base

Bond Yields

Country	Rate	Term
UK	7.1%	10yr
France	6.5%	10yr
Germany	6.0%	10yr
Italy	7.5%	10yr
Japan	5.7%	10yr
Spain	6.5%	10yr
Belgium	6.5%	10yr
Netherlands	6.5%	10yr
Denmark	6.5%	10yr
Norway	6.5%	10yr
Sweden	6.5%	10yr
Australia	6.5%	10yr
New Zealand	6.5%	10yr
South Africa	6.5%	10yr
India	6.5%	10yr
Singapore	6.5%	10yr

Money Market Rates

Country	Rate	Term
UK	5.75%	Base
France	5.50%	Base
Germany	5.50%	Base
Italy	5.75%	Base
Japan	5.75%	Base
Spain	5.75%	Base
Belgium	5.75%	Base
Netherlands	5.75%	Base
Denmark	5.75%	Base
Norway	5.75%	Base
Sweden	5.75%	Base
Australia	5.75%	Base
New Zealand	5.75%	Base
South Africa	5.75%	Base
India	5.75%	Base
Singapore	5.75%	Base

Tourist Rates

Country	Rate	Term
Australia	1.5729	8.8
Canada	0.6544	5.4
France	6.5493	68.61
Germany	1.3663	6.81
Italy	1.3663	6.81
Japan	160.32	95.91
UK	1.5729	8.8
Spain	160.32	95.91
Belgium	160.32	95.91
Netherlands	160.32	95.91
Denmark	160.32	95.91
Norway	160.32	95.91
Sweden	160.32	95.91
Australia	160.32	95.91
New Zealand	160.32	95.91
South Africa	160.32	95.91
India	160.32	95.91
Singapore	160.32	95.91

Life Financial Futures

		price	for day	traded	interest
Long Oil		100-15	100-20	100-15	852
German Gov Bd		9985	100-17	100-17	1016
3 Mth Eurodollar		92-13	92-13	92-13	23222
Japan Gov Bd		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
3 Mth Sterling		95-21	95-20	95-20	287
1 Mth Eurodollar		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
3 Mth Eurodollar		95-21	95-20	95-20	7698
3 Mth Eurodollar		95-21	95-20	95-20	22881
3 Mth Eurodollar		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
3 Mth Eurodollar		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
1 Mth BCU		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
1 Mth BCU		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
1 Mth BCU		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
1 Mth BCU		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
1 Mth BCU		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
1 Mth BCU		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
1 Mth BCU		95-21	95-20	95-20	1016
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sport

Unfortunately for Henman, who appears a well adjusted young man, there is very little chance he will be allowed to make steady progress

A problem for up and comers in British sport is the amount of expectation that grows up quickly around them. No sooner is someone off and running than there is foolish talk about world beating potential.

It is a good time to latch on to this because, in accordance with a reliable chore of sports journalism, one I am not comfortable with, newspapers will soon be publishing the names of those who may come further to our attention in the not too distant future.

The safest of bets, our old friend the certainty, is that the rising star of British tennis, Tim Henman, will be among them. A sensible reaction to Henman's straight-sets defeat by

Boris Becker in Germany last week was that it brought reality back to his prospects. My colleague, Simon O'Hagan, made a point of this when reporting the match for the *Independent on Sunday* and I wish others had followed his example.

Unfortunately for Henman, who appears to be a well-adjusted young man, there is very little chance that he will be allowed to make steady progress. The intense focus of media attention simply does not allow for it. With every step he takes, the burden of expectation increases.

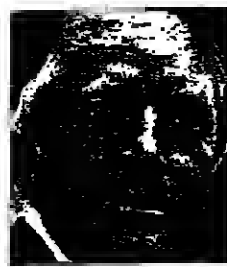
In holding Becker to a tie-break in the first set, Henman gave a thoroughly credible performance but doubtless his defeat gave rise to dis-

appointment in the news rooms of television, radio and newspapers.

Because it is almost 60 years since Fred Perry became the last British player to win the Men's Singles at Wimbledon, and the story since has been one of disappointment, you may not find this surprising – but it serves to indicate how much pressure Henman, at 22, is sure to come under.

At this stage of Henman's development it is advisable, I think, to take note of what Becker, who won Wimbledon when four years younger, felt after coming up against him for the first time.

"He's a player with a good future but who knows how far he is going to get?" the German said.



KEN JONES

In the world of modern sport, potential can be as suspect as faith in a lottery ticket or a horse that is known to be a dodgy jumper. The truth, as Calvin Coolidge argued, is that nothing is more common than unsuccessful people with tal-

ent; another thing Coolidge said is that nothing matters more than persistence.

Incidentally, I once passed on Coolidge's remarks to a thoughtful football manager who had grown seriously frustrated with the attitude of his charges. He had the words typed out and put up in the dressing room. "Coolidge," one of the players said, "Who the hell did he manage?"

To get back on track, hyperbole has held back many sporting careers. Mindless comparison, an eagerly employed tool of newspapers and television, brings its own problems. For example, it is not that long since Dominic Cork was hailed as the new Ian Botham. This

was as unfair on him as it was to hail Darren Gough as Fred Trueman's natural successor.

You can go on and on like this. Not so long ago, a problem for the Manchester United manager, Alex Ferguson, was that people saw another George Best in Ryan Giggs, and reacted accordingly. The young Welshman appears to have handled this quite well, which says a lot about his upbringing at Old Trafford, and Ferguson's protective instincts. Now, foolishly to my mind, David Beckham is being written and spoken about as England's next great player before he has matured fully in the Premiership.

Following Manchester United's

victory in Vienna recently, Beckham was the centre of attraction. By all accounts this is not causing Ferguson as much concern as he first imagined, but we can be sure that he would prefer more discretion.

None of this is peculiar to British sport but it does seem that nowhere else in the world is so much made of embryonic talent.

A good thing to remember is that people in sport see things from a different perspective. Many years ago it was put to Bill Shankly that the play of a young footballer on Liverpool's books was reminiscent of Tom Finney. With a vision of Finney in his mind, Shankly chuckled. "Aye," he said, "but Tommy is 52."

Fans converted by rugby's new voice



KEITH ELLIOTT

AT LARGE

My friend Alex once treated his wife to a weekend in a sprightly hotel near Bristol, only to find the place overrun by the Welsh rugby union team, intent on drinking the bar dry. As the evening wore on, certain players were all set to continue a battle that had taken place earlier on the pitch.

One 17-stone monster hanged into Alex, who was no mug when it came to a scrap. "Are you looking for a fight?" the Famous Player pleaded.

"The size of you? You must be joking," said Alex.

That always struck me as an eminently sensible way to defuse a potentially damaging situation, both for Alex and the hotel furniture. Insulting someone whose middle name is Mayhem might seem heroic at the time, but the benefits are generally outweighed by the surgery costs.

No such worries appear to beset the editors of the ground-breaking Gloucester fanzine, *Shedhead*, which insults with impunity everyone from Gareth Chilcott (Fat Git) to Phil de Glanville (Elephant Man). Nothing odd there, you might say. Football fanzines have been doing that for years. But rugby has never seen anything like it.

It's arguable whether *Shedhead* was the first rugby fanzine, but it is undeniably the best and the most successful. Started in autumn last year, it easily outsells Gloucester RFC's official programme. People queue outside the unlikely ground to buy the photocopied pages. Its fame has spread so far that supporters from other clubs as far away as West Hartlepool now ask the editors for advice.

It is everything a good fanzine should be: irreverent, outspoken, rude, crude, mis-spell, badly punctuated – and with its heart firmly rooted in the terraces. The surprise is that the brains behind it are not sporty teenagers but two men with successful business careers.

Ed Snow, a Gloucester fan all his life, had dreamed of running a fanzine but did not have the production expertise. The catalyst was Bob Fenton, who had recently moved to the city and whose strait-laced job as senior press officer for Nuclear Electric clearly belied his anarchic tendencies.

The pair were eminently qualified as terrace critics. Neither had played much rugby beyond the sixth form and, though Fenton looks like a useful front-row, he admits: "I played on the wing. I thought it was a bad day if I had to wash my shirt afterwards." But they knew what the Gloucester faithful wanted – and what they didn't want.

"There are a lot of professional rugby writers who get away with murder," Snow says. "They turn out sycophantic tripe to get sweet with players. What the public is getting is not what is happening in rugby. We aimed to address that by being funny, up-to-date and writing things as they really were."

Fenton adds: "We had a rough idea what we were going to do. There was a lot of anti-Will Carling and anti-Bath stuff, though I have to admit that the majority of the first issue was self-opinionated waffle."

In keeping with fanzine ethos, they did not tell the club what they were doing. And because they were not quite sure what the feedback would be, the first issue of 150 copies was anonymous. But they need not have worried. When Snow added his address in the second issue, the pair were delighted to find supporters writing in and encouraging them to continue. The first five issues were free, but success was costing them a packet. They took the decision to sell it for 50p. "We produced 600 and sold out," Fenton recalls. "It meant we could start to pay back some of the debts we had incurred." Now they print 1,800 against an average Gloucester following of

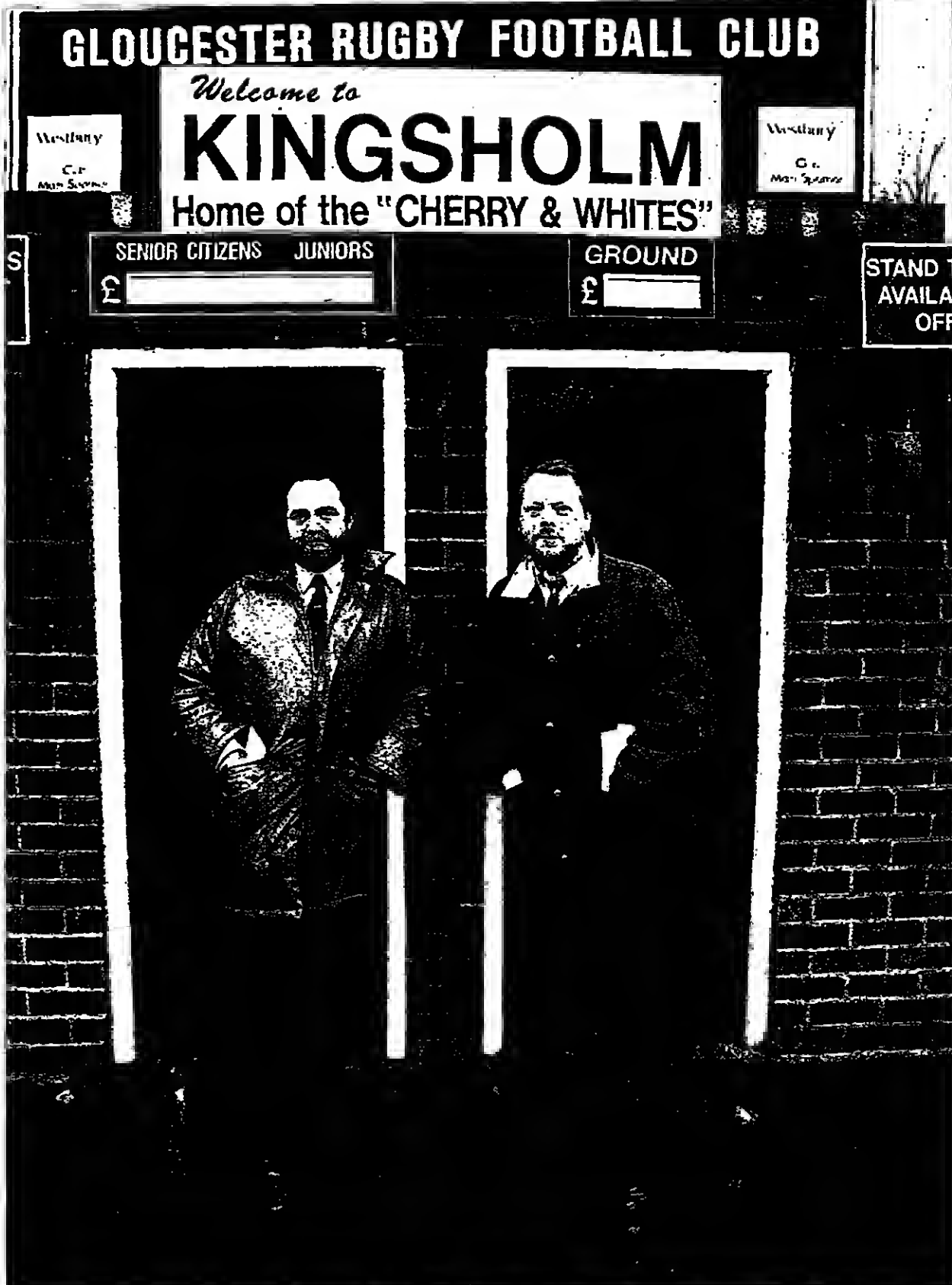
about 6,000) and queues form to buy a copy.

"Gloucester is quite an insular community and it's quite working class. They still look upon some players as outsiders. There is no rugby team like it, and no place with the same intensity. It's real in-your-face support, which is very intimidating," Fenton says. *Shedhead* (named after the stand where proper supporters stand) reflects this.

"People would rather buy this because we are more in touch with what they want to read," Fenton says. "The official club programme spoke to us about binding all or some of the magazine inside the official programme. What a cheek! We said no." Snow adds: "We have gone from being a minor annoyance to a thorn in their side."

So the pair continue to slam most rugby writing ("Light years behind football, they take themselves too seriously," says Snow); their fierce rivals Bath ("More money than sense") their own club, ticket prices, the ill-planned fixture list and racism. The decision to shun takeover moves means Snow can continue his unique programme seller's approach. "I shout Snear, Smut and Innuendo," he admits.

Of course, when you call officials useless tossers or players a bunch of mercenaries, chances are that the odd person will get upset. "People are amazed we are not bombarded with writs," Fenton says. "So far we have only had one solicitor's letter. It was a hard decision not to run the letter and write 'Bollocks' after it." Their closest run-in with Messrs Sue, Grahbit and Runne came when Simon Devereux was banged up for nine months for breaking a player's jaw. Fenton still gets enraged about it. "The charge of GBH with intent meant he went on to the pitch intending to break someone's jaw. It was ridiculous. "We even got a textbook out

Ed Snow (left) and Bob Fenton, the editors of *Shedhead*, outside Gloucester RFC's ground Photograph: Peter Jay

of the library to read up the law on intent, and wrote a one-page special. It was the closest we have come to being in contempt of the law. We ran it through a lawyer, who said: 'How long do you want to go to prison for?' We made a few changes."

That Saturday, they organised a collection outside the ground and raised about £500 to pass on to Devereux's heavily pregnant girlfriend. "I think it was our finest hour," says Fenton. "It got us notoriety in the area because we were prepared to say publicly

what a lot of people were saying privately." He adds: "I think we are making a difference in the way that Gloucester RFC is reported. At the end of the day, *Shedhead* is not an incitement to riot. We just try to add a bit of fun to Saturday afternoons."

And what of their insults to some big, aggressive men who bite the heads off puppies for fun? "The players like the idea of having terrace-level feedback," Fenton says. "They seem happy to be ritually humiliated by us – I think."

CRICKET: Explore the dark side of Wally Hammond and the light side of 'Dickie' Bird with David Llewellyn

Wisdom of cricketers and the Wisden of facts

There is nothing like a good mystery story to fill the long hours between meals over the festive period. Before giving in to pre- and post-prandial sleep, scratch the itch of curiosity and dip into one of the most absorbing cricketing biographies to hit the shelves since David Foot's last work.

Wally Hammond, Gloucestershire and England, professional and amateur, batsman and bowler, hail the lot, including an obscene amount of natural sporting talent earning him a string of records in the game. His physical fitness and good looks attracted women to him and prompted plenty of speculation about his sexual athleticism.

Yet, as David Foot reveals in his sensitively written biography *Wally Hammond: The Reason for War* (Robson Books, £17.95), the figures and the facts of this cricketing legend on the field shed no light on the darker side of someone regarded by many of his contemporaries as a taciturn, uncommunicative figure, with little sense of humour, an obsession with privacy and, the

worst of all English social crimes, a snob to boot. Personal relationships did not work out, nor did business ventures and Hammond died in comparative poverty in South Africa in 1965 – leaving behind him enough rumour, innuendo and whisperings to titillate the curious.

Foot examines the bizarre circumstances surrounding the young Hammond's illness which forced him to miss the 1926 season. Was it malaria or syphilis that he contracted in the Caribbean? Was he descended from a more exotic bloodline than his Anglo-Saxon parentage suggested? Were these the determining factors in the formation of one of the enigmas of English cricket?

Foot addresses the probing and analysis, attempting to unravel the Gordian knot of the psyche, trying to understand the motivation of a sportsman, looking for answers that he knows are probably going to elude him, but what a riveting read all the same.

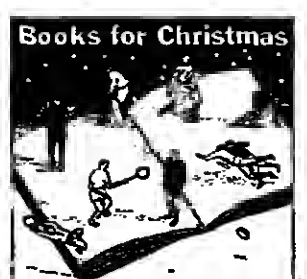
And there is not too much cricket. Hammond's private life has been carefully pieced to-

gether by Foot, himself a Somerset man so he had no real axe to grind, and the cricket has been placed gently on the back burner, simmering quietly, just a spoonful being applied by the author here and there, and only where relevant.

Foot has gone to great lengths in his research to hook up his hypotheses on his subject, going so far as to quote from a medical paper on the subject of mercury as a treatment for syphilis, published in 1990, and its long-term side effects. A challenging and absorbing book, well worth the money.

As a contrast with the Hammond biography, the colourful Allan Lamb is anything but coy in his life story *Allan Lamb, My Autobiography* (Collins Willow, £15.99) is so highly coloured that in fact it led to the South African-born English Test batsman being forced out of the game.

By agreeing to publish the book while still a player, Lamb was in breach of Test and County Cricket Board regulations and so he retired from active service and followed the well-



Books for Christmas

worn route of retired sports personalities into a new career in the electronic media.

Lamb goes into detail about the ball tampering affair during the 1992 series against Pakistan and the court case against Imran Khan; he also writes of the infamous Kerry Packer in the casino affair during the 1990-91 tour of Australia – and he makes it clear that he does not tolerate curfews, having adopted the work hard, play hard philosophy.

He does do what Foot admirably avoids, relating the various keynote matches, innings, catches etc. – but for sheer honesty and guts – he did after all know that it would finish his career by going ahead

and publishing – this particular account takes a lot of bearing.

It would be impossible to store every life story published, so the next best way has to be by acquiring one of the most comprehensive and authoritative biographical dictionaries on world cricket ever published. Christopher Martin-Jenkins' *World Cricketers* (Oxford University Press, £25.00) is a staggering tome, spanning cricket's Test playing A-Z – Australia to Zimbabwe.

The intention, claims the author, was "to produce readable, short biographies of every notable player or influential personality from the earliest days to present."

Martin-Jenkins, together with a knowledgeable team of writers, has certainly achieved that admirably. While appearing pricey, this represents real value for money and a worthy addition to any cricketing library.

While an autobiography is due out in the New Year, fans of the game's favourite umpire, Dickie Bird, can settle down with Brian Scovell's *Dickie – A*

tribute to Umpire Harold Bird (Partridge Press, £12.99), a comprehensive collection of anecdotes and tributes culled from everyone who is anyone in the game and out of it: celebrities, politicians, peers. It amuses and whets the appetite for something more substantial about this most eccentric of characters.

Dickie is featured in Bob Willis's oddball, *Cricketer – Sir of the Best* (Hodder & Stoughton, £14.99). A series of categories in the game, with some thought-provoking opinions from the former England captain and fast bowler. Unusual, but well worth a read though.

A journalist lives by the creed: Today's newspaper is tomorrow's chip wrapper. Given that, attempts at collecting the best writing is almost sacrilege.

Perhaps it might introduce people to different newspapers, but the subjectivity of such a volume is generally enough to make the adjective "best" redundant. For all that, David Rayvern Allen's *In The Covers – The Best Cricket Writing of the Year* (Headline, £15.99) is an ex-

cellent distillation all of the happenings in 1996.

While the expected doyens of the cricket press box are included, there are also pieces by some up-and-comers, including the *Independent's* Adam Szreter.

It would be foolish to discount the hardy annuals which appear every year. The superbly produced *Benson & Hedges Cricket Year* (15th edition, edited by David Lemon, Bloomsbury, £20.00) has the lot, from all over the world and in a very short time. You want to know what happened last season? Relive the memories of the NatWest Trophy final? Or find out where your man finished in the averages? This has the answers.

If B&H's masterwork is the New Testament, *Wisden* remains the Bible of the game. It is still some four months until next year's primrose yellow jacketed Almanac appears, but the 133rd Edition is still available at £24.50, as is Playfair's invaluable *vade mecum*, the 1996 *Cricket Annual*, edited by the incomparable Bill Frindall – a bargain at £4.99.

sports letters

Redgrave's greatness overlooked

From Derek Ross
Sir: The British Public are a strange lot. We certainly do not recognise a legend when we see one. In our midst we have an athlete whose endeavours and achievements will never be bettered or even matched by any of his contemporaries in this country in any sport you care to mention. Sixteen years of unparalleled success, consecutive gold medals, an icon within his own sport and a legend in his own lifetime. Not for him the spoils of lucrative sponsorship deals; 30m contracts or even the advantage of family ties. But in their stead an uncompromising commitment to hard work, a burning desire to be and remain the best, and a lifestyle of which many would be envious. Given his stature as an athlete...

One would obviously concede that Formula One motor racing is far more dangerous than rowing, but it is not also true that in rowing there is an almost total absence of good fortune? Other rowers' boats do not crash, break down or run off the track. There is no mechanical advantage of the "best boat".

There can be no justification for a decision that went to a man (Damon Hill, who won the BBC Sports Personality of the Year) whose one-off achievement pale into insignificance when placed against an athlete whose victories over sixteen years are as unbelievable as this result. There is only one solution. When Steve Redgrave is approaching the finishing line for his fifth consecutive gold medal at the Sydney Olympics we must ensure that Murray Walker is commenting.

Yet this colossal achievement will still fail in the eyes of the British public. The reason? Tim Henman would have reached the quarter final at Wimbledon.

D ROSS
Wittington, Manchester

England's wise move

From Tim Crake
Sir: How wise England were not to play the Australian (rugby union) touring side, especially on last Saturday's appalling performance against Argentina.

At least we were spared the humiliating spectacle of a serious thrashing.
T CRAIG
Hindford, Oswestry

Cricket

embarrassment

From Michael Drake
Sir: Why don't England withdraw from international cricket for a while ("Defeat leaves England rising further ridicule" – 16 December)? After all, it didn't seem to do South Africa sport any harm. And hasn't the political equivalent of "I'll take my bat home" become a national characteristic anyway? I'll use the Euro Veterinary Bill – 16 December?
M DRAKE
Millon Keynes

Letters should be marked "For publication" and should contain daytime and evening phone numbers. They should be sent to Sports Editor, The Independent, 1, Canada Square, London, E14 5DL. They may be shortened for reasons of space.

Sport and art

The book reviewed by Andrew Graham-Dixon in Tuesday's paper was *SPORTS: A Cultural History in the Mirror of Art* (published by Verlag der Kunst, an imprint of G+B Arts International, price £78).

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Weight of expectation
Ken Jones on the problems facing players with potential, page 24

Voice from the crowd
Keith Elliott looks at the rise of the rugby fanzine, page 24

FIRST TEST: Glamorgan spinner takes three wickets to spare his team's blushes as Zimbabwe's captain leads by example

Croft papers over the England cracks

DEREK PRINGLE

reports from Bulawayo
Zimbabwe 258-6 v England

Until yesterday, Michael Atherton must have felt a bit like the African dung beetle that spends all its time rolling huge balls of debris around in Sisyphus-like futility. But just as Zimbabwe threatened to make one man's burden intolerable, along comes a chirpy Welsh sparrow called Robert Croft. An off-spinner whose flight and flight have added levity to the visitors' cause, and ensured, on a day when England started poorly, that honours are even.

Croft, now 26, and appearing in only his second Test, already looks like the old stager England's assistant coach, John Emburey, became after more than half a dozen years in the role. Emburey quickly paid tribute to the way Croft found the optimum pace to bowl his off-breaks, in light of the slow pitch conditions.

As this usually meant giving the ball plenty of air, it was presumably slower than normal, which allowed the ball to grip and turn, though not extravagantly – something that may happen as the pitch and match wear on. It is a prospect the Glamorgan spinner is already relishing and after first day figures that read 29-12-45-3 he has every reason to feel more confident than England's batsmen will do too, should Paul Strang's leg-breaks begin to bite.

In any case, four more wickets are needed before England take strike, and Zimbabwe, who bat a long way down, are quite capable of adding at least

another hundred runs to their overnight score.

Croft apart, there was very little else to crow about, as the tourists conceded almost a hundred runs a session up until tea. Afterwards, England's coach, David Lloyd, felt that after a "poor morning" the team had responded to some "harsh lunch-time words" from Atherton. A dressing-down that he must have delivered in Welsh, for all the immediate effect it had, and it was not until after tea that England looked a team in control.

As expected, the home side's war of propaganda came to an end when the coin came down in their favour and all talk of fielding evaporated into cloudless skies. Instead, it was England, with Chris Silverwood preferred to Andy Caddick as the third seamer, who had to head out to bowl under a burning sun.

Success was instant – in terms of five-day matches – but ultimately uninspiring, as Darren Gough struck with his third ball of the morning. It was Gough's first Test wicket for 18 months – since the Lord's Test of 1995 to be precise – and it owed much to John Crawley's sharp reaction catch at short-leg as the ball flew quickly from the inside-edge of Stuart Carlisle's thrusting bat.

Zimbabwe's opening pair have a reputation for being stodgier than "sodas" – a glue like staple made from maize-meal – and parting them before the new ball had dulled was the perfect opportunity for England to get at their strokeplaying middle-order before the ball softened. Woefully, length and direction took a downturn.

Alastair Campbell, batting as if the burdens of captaincy were as helium to Atherton's lead

weight, struck the ball with great authority, taking regular boundaries from England's profligacy, as Alan Mullally, and the understandably nervous debutant Silverwood, strayed from the business areas of this slow pitch.

Silverwood, that monolithic first Test wicket claimed when he had Grant Flower brilliantly caught by Nasser Hussain diving to his left at fourth slip, eventually settled. Later he took the second new ball in front of Mullally, a brave captaincy decision considering he had been conceding around five runs per over.

Like the magnificent Graeme Pollock, the left-handed Campbell tends to favour the front foot, yet is equally quick to punish anything short with a crunching assortment of pulls and cuts. Together with Grant Flower, he put on 127 for the second wicket.

His fifty took 70 balls, and was quick by Test standards, containing nine fours. A boundary count that was stemmed with the introduction of Robert Croft, who eventually snared the Zimbabwe skipper, turning him into an ineffectual lofted drive that ended up in Silverwood's hands at backward cover.

Zimbabwe then showed their inexperience by allowing England back into the game that Andy Flower and Dave Houghton had all but doled them out of with a partnership worth 70 at tea.

Apart from being a good player of spin, Houghton is a notoriously poor starter after any kind of break and Zimbabwe's most experienced player soon fell to Croft, the victim of a lazy offside push that found its way into Alec Stewart's gloves.

His departure brought the game's second debutant, Andy Walker, a 37-year-old veteran one-day player whose heroics as an opener last Sunday were not matched in the middle-order as he became Croft's third victim.

By now, Tufnell, operating in tandem with Croft, slowed Zimbabwe's rapid earlier progress although Andy Flower, batting with unaccustomed resolve, reached his fifty with a lovely lofted drive for four off the Middlesex left-arm.

With the new ball taken, Silverwood added a second wicket to his tally, allowing England to finish in better shape than they deserved.



Robert Croft celebrates the wicket of Zimbabwe's David Houghton during the first day's play in Bulawayo yesterday

Photograph: Allsport

Atherton's apprehension over spin

While Robert Croft stole the show with his splendid off-spin bowling – it was the best spell I have seen for a long time – it was a day which also emphasised the inherent lack of faith that Mike Atherton has in spin bowling.

In the morning, after the boost of an early wicket, England's seam bowlers produced a most wasteful and disappointing display on a surface which with a little early moisture gave them some help.

Atherton tried all five of his bowlers. Yet by lunch the stirring strokeplay of Alastair Campbell and the more adhesive methods of opener Grant Flower had given Zimbabwe an

important advantage. But there had been one crucial piece of evidence: both Croft and Phil Tufnell had turned the ball.

Campbell and Flower played themselves in again after lunch before Flower edged Chris Silverwood to slip. Six runs later Croft bowled to Campbell and gave a ball which he held back a beguiling amount of air. Campbell took the bait and came down the pitch and drove powerfully, but he was beaten in the air and the ball sliced to backward point. It was a great piece of bowling.

With the ball turning and with two new batsmen at the crease, it was now that Atherton missed a most important trick, and all

Henry Blofeld on a superb day for England's spinner Robert Croft

because of his apprehensions about spin bowling which have all too often been evident. He should at once have brought Tufnell on at the Town End to partner Croft. It was the perfect moment for the two spinners to bowl in tandem.

Yet Atherton persisted with Silverwood and Darren Gough who, although they bowled better than they had in the morning, which was not difficult, were never likely to cause the

same problems as the two spinners. The two new batsmen, David Houghton and Andy Flower, both started badly but managed to survive.

Croft continued at the airport end after tea and soon produced another beauty. He bowled Houghton a quicker ball which went on with his arm and away from the right hander and found the edge of his back-foot forcing stroke. This was another demonstration of the excellent and wide variety Croft has at his disposal. In Swansea, his mentor, Don Shepherd, the former Glamorgan bowler, must have been delighted.

It was only now that Atherton brought Tufnell into the

attack with Croft and of course the left-arm spinner did not bowl with the confidence he would have done if he had joined forces with Croft soon after lunch. His captain had hardly given him a vote of confidence.

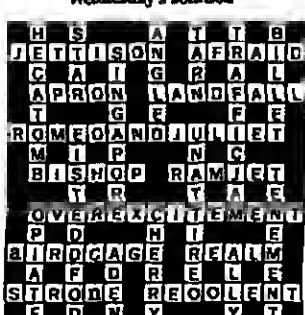
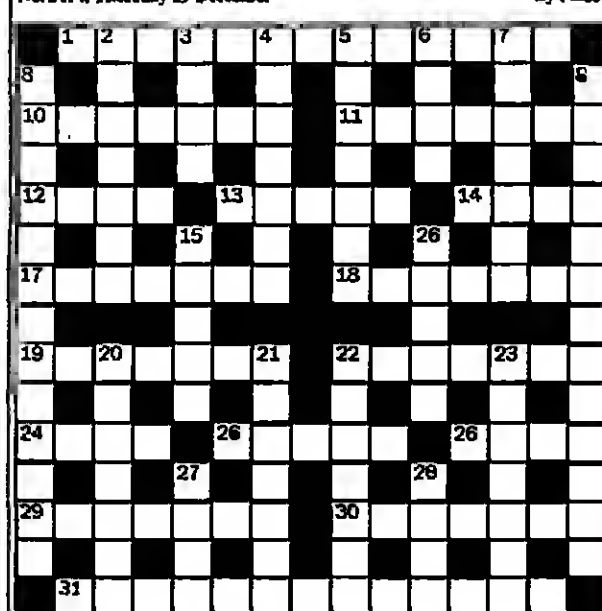
By not using Croft and Tufnell together until so late in the day, Atherton did not give Tufnell his best chance nor England the opportunity of bowling Zimbabwe out on this first day. He must realise that good spinners are an integral part of an attack and, just as important, he must learn to trust them – otherwise what is the point of having them in the side?

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3174, Thursday 19 December

By Moss

Wednesday's solution



- ACROSS**
- Reducing bottle? Girl's trying to control figure (13)
 - Argue seconds after the event (7)
 - Like spring in Castle, maybe (7)
 - Ship circling edge of shore in tide (4)
 - Reportedly those who acquire neat buildings (5)
 - Queen tricked by second of Rooks (4)
 - Figure regarded as an example in Italy? (7)
 - A doctor in good deal's returned as locum (7)
 - Boisterous? Bathing's no good in the drink (7)
 - Charge interest (7)
 - Wrong drink? About right (4)

- DOWN**
- Quite in line, English (5)
 - Assemble in convention (4)
 - One entering country (or state) (7)
 - Flood from one in car crashing about noon (7)
 - District where people never go to pet (9,4)
 - Minute precipitate (7)
 - Ring in Ben shows the time (4)
 - Such a trying type! (7)
 - A demonstrative American hero (7)
 - Close fifth of volunteers on organ (4)
 - A trifle light up top, in drink (7)
 - Double might get nitwit, nice lad, tipsy (9,4)

City planning the Maine move

Football

Manchester City will safeguard the future of their Maine Road headquarters even if they seal a deal to move into the new stadium to be built for the Commonwealth Games.

The First Division club have been given a tentative offer to become "anchor tenants" in the 60,000-seater stadium to be developed across the city at Eastlands after the Games take place in 2002.

Even though City have welcomed the initial idea with open arms, they are also keen to confirm Maine Road will still have a part to play if the move takes place.

"Maine Road is safe as a sporting venue. We feel it would still be a viable sports arena even if we did go to the new stadium," said City's chief executive Colin Barlow, who harbours a

sense of disappointment that the Sports Council chose Wembley ahead of Manchester as the site of the new £210m-plus National Stadium.

"We were invited to become anchor tenants at the stadium when Manchester formulated its National Stadium bid last October and I was part of the bid committee," Barlow said. "It was an idea that appealed to us and it's something we will be continuing with even though Manchester was not awarded the National Stadium itself."

Maine Road has been the home of City since 1923 and despite once housing a crowd of 84,569 for an FA Cup tie against Stoke in 1934 – a British record for any game played outside London or Glasgow – the ground capacity is now 31,000. The club also has a training complex at nearby Platt Lane, a development which helped win them the Community Club

of the Year award last year, and they see no reason why their current headquarters should not continue to flourish if a move is eventually agreed.

The bitter blow of losing out to Wembley was cushioned when the Sports Council revealed they would be handing over £60m for the new Manchester stadium.

Meanwhile, Phil Neal yesterday said that he is doing his best to cope with the pressure of being Manchester City manager – despite the constant speculation that he will be out of a job in the New Year.

Neal continues to put on a brave face even though the Manchester United No 2 Brian Kidd, the former Leeds manager Howard Wilkinson and the current Wimbledon manager Joe Kinnear are the latest crop of names to be linked with the club.

Kidd, who played for both

Manchester clubs and was City's original target as the successor to Brian Horton 18 months ago, has become the favourite to take over.

City's plight near the foot of the First Division has placed more pressure on Neal, who said: "I can't afford to let the speculation get me down as the players don't want to see a miserable manager."

"It would be detracting from what I'm being paid for and it would be an injustice to the fans and the players," he said. "But I am aware and I am told about what's going on."

Neal has vowed to continue to battle for recognition at the club as he prepares for Saturday's vital derby fixture with Oldham. He added: "I was not the first choice but I am trying to earn my spurs to gain the post. I was brought here as a No 2 to Steve Coppell and was very happy to be so. But you cannot get disgruntled about certain names cropping up, although it happens almost daily. It's getting absurd."

A new home and future for Newcastle

Newcastle United will map out their financial future today by unveiling plans for a new stadium and a stock market flotation. The club's owner, Sir John Hall, has made a huge investment in players and the combination of a bigger stadium and a share issue would offset that outlay and pave the way for further spending.

Newcastle's current home, St James' Park, only has a capacity of 36,610 at a time when the club could attract the 50,000-plus crowds which watch Manchester United at Old Trafford.

Newcastle's preferred site is believed to be on Castle Leazes Moor. As far as flotation plans go, Hall had originally planned to float his ambitious scheme to create a Sporting Club, with basketball, ice hockey and rugby teams, but it is now thought only the football club will move for a full market listing, with estimates of a value for the club ranging between £140m to £200m. Footie football index, page 18



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